

STANDARD EDITION

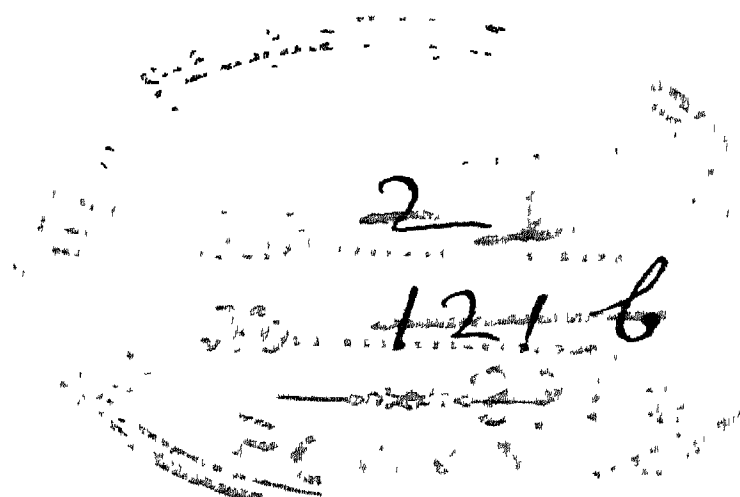
THE WORKS OF  
GEORGE ELIOT



THE LEGEND OF JUBAL

AND

OTHER POEMS, OLD AND NEW



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

O:3/192

Bx-3

27365

L .

# C O N T E N T S.

---

	PAGE
THE LEGEND OF JUBAL, . . . .	1
(REPRINTED FROM 'MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE.')	
AGATHA, . . . . .	47
(REPRINTED FROM 'THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY.')	
ARMGART, . . . . .	71
(REPRINTED FROM 'MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE.')	
HOW LISA LOVED THE KING, . . . .	143
(REPRINTED FROM 'BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.')	
A MINOR PROPHET, . . . . .	179
BROTHER AND SISTER, . . . . .	197
STRADIVARIUS, . . . . .	211
A COLLEGE BREAKFAST-PARTY, . . . .	221
(REPRINTED FROM 'MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE.')	
TWO LOVERS, . . . . .	265
SELF AND LIFE, . . . . .	271

## THE LEGEND OF JUBAL.

---

WHEN Cain was driven from Jehovah's land  
He wandered eastward, seeking some far strand  
Ruled by kind gods who asked no offerings  
Save pure field-fruits, as aromatic things,  
To feed the subtler sense of frames divine  
That lived on fragrance for their food and wine :  
Wild joyous gods, who winked at faults and folly,  
And could be pitiful and melancholy.  
He never had a doubt that such gods were ;  
He looked within, and saw them mirrored there.  
Some think he came at last to Tartary,  
And some to Ind ; but, howsoe'er it be,

His staff he planted where sweet waters ran,  
And in that home of Cain the Arts began.

Man's life was spacious in the early world :  
It paused, like some slow ship with sail unfurled  
Waiting in seas by scarce a wavelet curled ;  
Beheld the slow star-paces of the skies,  
And grew from strength to strength through centuries ;  
Saw infant trees fill out their giant limbs,  
And heard a thousand times the sweet birds' marriage hymns.

In Cain's young city none had heard of Death  
Save him, the founder ; and it was his faith  
That here, away from harsh Jehovah's law,  
Man was immortal, since no halt or flaw  
In Cain's own frame betrayed six hundred years,  
But dark as pines that autumn never sears  
His locks thronged backward as he ran, his frame  
Rose like the orbèd sun each morn the same,

Lake-mirrored to his gaze ; and that red brand,  
The scorching impress of Jehovah's hand,  
Was still clear-edged to his unwearied eye,  
Its secret firm in time-fraught memory.

He said, "My happy offspring shall not know  
That the red life from out a man may flow  
When smitten by his brother." True, his race  
Bore each one stamped upon his new-born face  
A copy of the brand no whit less clear ;  
But every mother held that little copy dear.

Thus generations in glad idlesse throve,   ▲  
Nor hunted prey, nor with each other strove ;  
For clearest springs were plenteous in the land,  
And gourds for cups ; the ripe fruits sought the  
hand,

Bending the laden boughs with fragrant gold ;  
And for their roofs and garments wealth untold  
Lay everywhere in grasses and broad leaves :  
They laboured gently, as a maid who weaves  
Her hair in mimic mats, and pauses oft  
And strokes across her palm the tresses soft,

Then peeps to watch the poisèd butterfly,  
Or little burthened ants that homeward hie.  
Time was but leisure to their lingering thought,  
There was no need for haste to finish aught ;  
But sweet beginnings were repeated still  
Like infant babblings that no task fulfil ;  
For love, that loved not change, constrained the  
simple will.

Till, hurling stones in mere athletic joy,  
Strong Lamech struck and killed his fairest  
boy, •

And tried to wake him with the tenderest cries,  
And fetched and held before the glazèd eyes  
The things they best had loved to look upon ;  
But never glance or smile or sigh he won.  
The generations stood around those twain  
Helplessly gazing, till their father Cain  
Parted the press, and said, " He will not wake ;  
This is the endless sleep, and we must make  
A bed deep down for him beneath the sod ;  
For know, my sons, there is a mighty God

Angry with all man's race, but most with me.  
I fled from out His land in vain !—'tis He  
Who came and slew the lad, for He has found  
This home of ours, and we shall all be bound  
By the harsh bands of His most cruel will,  
Which any moment may some dear one kill.  
Nay, though we live for countless moons, at last  
We and all ours shall die like summers past.  
This is Jehovah's will, and He is strong ;  
I thought the way I travelled was too long  
For Him to follow me : my thought was vain !  
He walks unseen, but leaves a track of pain,  
Pale Death His footprint is, and He will come  
again !”

And a new spirit from that hour came o'er  
The race of Cain : soft idlesse was no more,  
But even the sunshine had a heart of care,  
Smiling with hidden dread—a mother fair  
Who folding to her breast a dying child  
Beams with feigned joy that but makes sadness  
mild.

Death was now lord of Life, and at his word  
Time, vague as air before, new terrors stirred,  
With measured wing now audibly arose  
Throbbing through all things to some unknown close.  
Now glad Content by clutching Haste was torn,  
And Work grew eager, and Device was born.  
It seemed the light was never loved before,  
Now each man said, "'Twill go and come no more."  
No budding branch, no pebble from the brook,  
No form, no shadow, but new dearness took  
From the one thought that life must have an end;  
And the last parting now began to send  
Diffusive dread through love and wedded bliss,  
Thrilling them into finer tenderness.  
Then Memory disclosed her face divine,  
That like the calm nocturnal lights doth shine  
Within the soul, and shows the sacred graves,  
And shows the presence that no sunlight craves,  
No space, no warmth, but moves among them all;  
Gone and yet here, and coming at each call,  
With ready voice and eyes that understand,  
And lips that ask a kiss, and dear responsive hand.

Thus to Cain's race death was tear-watered seed  
Of various life and action-shaping need.

But chief the sons of Lamech felt the stings  
Of new ambition, and the force that springs  
In passion beating on the shores of fate.

They said, "There comes a night when all too  
late

The mind shall long to prompt the achieving hand,  
The eager thought behind closed portals stand,  
And the last wishes to the mute lips press  
Buried ere death in silent helplessness.

Then while the soul its way with sound can cleave,  
And while the arm is strong to strike and heave,  
Let soul and arm give shape that will abide  
And rule above our graves, and power divide  
With that great god of day, whose rays must bend  
As we shall make the moving shadows tend.

Come, let us fashion acts that are to be,  
When we shall lie in darkness silently,  
As our young brother doth, whom yet we see  
Fallen and slain, but reigning in our will  
By that one image of him pale and still."

For Lamech's sons were heroes of their race :

Jabal, the eldest, bore upon his face

The look of that calm river-god, the Nile,

Mildly secure in power that needs not guile.

But Tubal-Cain was restless as the fire

That glows and spreads and leaps from high to  
higher

Where'er is aught to seize or to subdue ,

Strong as a storm he lifted or o'erthrew,

His urgent limbs like rounded granite grew,

Such granite as the plunging torrent wears

And roaring rolls around through countless years.

But strength that still on movement must be fed,

Inspiring thought of change, devices bred,

And urged his mind through earth and air to rove

For force that he could conquer if he strove,

For lurking forms that might new tasks fulfil

And yield unwilling to his stronger will.

Such Tubal-Cain. But Jubal had a frame

Fashioned to finer senses, which became

A yearning for some hidden soul of things,

Some outward touch complete on inner springs

That vaguely moving bred a lonely pain,  
A want that did but stronger grow with gain  
Of all good else, as spirits might be sad  
For lack of speech to tell us they are glad.

Now Jabal learned to tame the lowing kine,  
And from their udders drew the snow-white wine  
That stirs the innocent joy, and makes the stream  
Of elemental life with fulness teem ;  
The star-browed calves he nursed with feeding  
hand,

And sheltered them, till all the little band •  
Stood mustered gazing at the sunset way  
Whence he would come with store at close of day.  
He soothed the silly sheep with friendly tone  
And reared their staggering lambs that, older grown,  
Followed his steps with sense-taught memory ;  
Till he, their shepherd, could their leader be  
And guide them through the pastures as he would,  
With sway that grew from ministry of good.  
He spread his tents upon the grassy plain  
Which, eastward widening like the open main,

Showed the first whiteness 'neath the morning  
star;

Near him his sister, deft, as women are,  
Plied her quick skill in sequence to his thought  
Till the hid treasures of the milk she caught  
Revealed like pollen 'mid the petals white,  
The golden pollen, virgin to the light.  
Even the she-wolf with young, on rapine bent,  
He caught and tethered in his mat-walled tent,  
And cherished all her little sharp-nosed young  
Till the small race with hope and terror clung  
About his footsteps, till each new-reared brood,  
Remoter from the memories of the wood,  
More glad discerned their common home with man.  
This was the work of Jabal: he began  
The pastoral life, and, sire of joys to be,  
Spread the sweet ties that bind the family  
O'er dear dumb souls that thrilled at man's caress,  
And shared his pains with patient helpfulness.

But Tubal-Cain had caught and yoked the fire,  
Yoked it with stones that bent the flaming spire

And made it roar in prisoned servitude  
Within the furnace, till with force subdued  
It changed all forms he willed to work upon,  
Till hard from soft, and soft from hard, he won.  
The pliant clay he moulded as he would,  
And laughed with joy when 'mid the heat it stood  
Shaped as his hand had chosen, while the mass  
That from his hold, dark, obstinate, would pass,  
He drew all glowing from the busy heat,  
All breathing as with life that he could beat  
With thundering hammer, making it obey  
His will creative, like the pale soft clay.  
Each day he wrought and better than he planned,  
Shape breeding shape beneath his restless hand.  
(The soul without still helps the soul within,  
And its deft magic ends what we begin.)  
Nay, in his dreams his hammer he would wield  
And seem to see a myriad types revealed,  
Then spring with wondering triumphant cry,  
And, lost the inspiring vision should go by,  
Would rush to labour with that plastic zeal  
Which all the passion of our life can steal

For force to work with. Each day saw the birth  
Of various forms which, flung upon the earth,  
Seemed harmless toys to cheat the exacting hour.  
But were as seeds instinct with hidden power.  
The axe, the club, the spikèd wheel, the chain,  
Held silently the shrieks and moans of pain ;  
And near them latent lay in share and spade,  
In the strong bar, the saw, and deep-curved blade,  
Glad voices of the hearth and harvest-home,  
The social good, and all earth's joy to come.  
Thus to mixed ends wrought Tubal ; and they say,  
Some things he made have lasted to this day ;  
As, thirty silver pieces that were found  
By Noah's children buried in the ground.  
He made them from mere hunger of device,  
Those small white discs ; but they became the price  
The traitor Judas sold his Master for ;  
And men still handling them in peace and war  
Catch foul disease, that comes as appetite,  
And lurks and clings as withering, damning blight.  
But Tubal-Cain wot not of treachery,  
Nor greedy lust, nor any ill to be,

Save the one ill of sinking into nought,  
Banished from action and act-shaping thought.  
He was the sire of swift-transforming skill,  
Which arms for conquest man's ambitious will ;  
And round him gladly, as his hammer rung,  
Gathered the elders and the growing young :  
These handled vaguely and those plied the tools,  
Till, happy chance begetting conscious rules,  
The home of Cain with industry was rife,  
And glimpses of a strong persistent life,  
Panting through generations as one breath,  
And filling with its soul the blank of death.

Jubal, too, watched the hammer, till his eyes,  
No longer following its fall or rise,  
Seemed glad with something that they could not  
see,

But only listened to—some melody,  
Wherein dumb longings inward speech had found,  
Won from the common store of struggling sound.  
Then, as the metal shapes more various grew,  
And, hurled upon each other, resonance drew,

Each gave new tones, the revelations dim  
Of some external soul that spoke for him :  
The hollow vessel's clang, the clash, the boom,  
Like light that makes wide spiritual room  
And skyey spaces in the spaceless thought,  
To Jubal such enlargèd passion brought  
That love, hope, rage, and all experience,  
Were fused in vaster being, fetching thence  
Concords and discords, cadences and cries  
That seemed from some world-shrouded soul to  
    rise,  
Some rapture more intense, some mightier rage,  
Some living sea that burst the bounds of man's brief  
    age.

Then with such blissful trouble and glad care  
For growth within unborn as mothers bear,  
To the far woods he wandered, listening,  
And heard the birds their little stories sing  
In notes whose rise and fall seemed melted  
    speech—

Melted with tears, smiles, glances—that can reach

More quickly through our frame's deep-winding  
night,  
And without thought raise thought's best fruit, de-  
light.

Pondering, he sought his home again and heard  
The fluctuant changes of the spoken word :  
The deep remonstrance and the argued want,  
Insistent first in close monotonous chant,  
Next leaping upward to defiant stand  
Or downward beating like the resolute hand ;  
The mother's call, the children's answering cry,  
The laugh's light cataract tumbling from on high ;  
The suasive repetitions Jabal taught,  
That timid browsing cattle homeward brought ;  
The clear-winged fugue of echoes vanishing ;  
And through them all the hammer's rhythmic ring.  
Jubal sat lonely, all around was dim,  
Yet his face glowed with light revealed to him :  
For as the delicate stream of odour wakes  
The thought-wed sentience and some image makes  
From out the mingled fragments of the past,  
Finely compact in wholeness that will last,

So streamed as from the body of each sound  
Subtler pulsations, swift as warmth, which found  
All prisoned germs and all their powers unbound,  
Till thought self-luminous flamed from memory,  
And in creative vision wandered free.

Then Jubal, standing, rapturous arms upraised,  
And on the dark with eager eyes he gazed,  
As had some manifested god been there.

It was his thought he saw : the presence fair  
Of unachieved achievement, the high task,  
The struggling unborn spirit that doth ask  
With irresistible cry for blood and breath,  
Till feeding its great life we sink in death.

He said, " Were now those mighty tones and cries  
That from the giant soul of earth arise,  
Those groans of some great travail heard from far,  
Some power at wrestle with the things that are,  
Those sounds which vary with the varying form  
Of clay and metal, and in sightless swarm  
Fill the wide space with tremors : were these wed  
To human voices with such passion fed

As does but glimmer in our common speech,  
But might flame out in tones whose changing reach,  
Surpassing meagre need, informs the sense  
With fuller union, finer difference—  
Were this great vision, now obscurely bright  
As morning hills that melt in new-poured light,  
Wrought into solid form and living sound,  
Moving with ordered throb and sure rebound,  
Then——Nay, I Jubal will that work begin !  
The generations of our race shall win  
New life, that grows from out the heart of this,  
As spring from winter, or as lovers' bliss •  
From out the dull unknown of unwaked energies.”

Thus he resolved, and in the soul-fed light  
Of coming ages waited through the night,  
Watching for that near dawn whose chiller ray  
Showed but the unchanged world of yesterday ;  
Where all the order of his dream divine  
Lay like Olympian forms within the mine ;  
Where fervour that could fill the earthly round  
With throngèd joys of form-begotten sound

Must shrink intense within the patient power  
That lonely labours through the niggard hour.  
Such patience have the heroes who begin,  
Sailing the first to lands which others win.  
Jubal must dare as great beginners dare,  
Strike form's first way in matter rude and bare,  
And, yearning vaguely toward the plenteous quire  
Of the world's harvest, make one poor small lyre.  
He made it, and from out its measured frame  
Drew the harmonic soul, whose answers came  
With guidance sweet and lessons of delight  
Teaching, to ear and hand the blissful Right,  
Where strictest law is gladness to the sense  
And all desire bends toward obedience.

Then Jubal poured his triumph in a song—  
The rapturous word that rapturous notes prolong  
As radiance streams from smallest things that burn,  
Or thought of loving into love doth turn.  
And still his lyre gave companionship  
In sense-taught concert as of lip with lip.  
Alone amid the hills at first he tried

His wingèd song ; then with adoring pride  
And bridegroom's joy at leading forth his bride,  
He said, "This wonder which my soul hath  
found,

This heart of music in the might of sound,  
Shall forthwith be the share of all our race  
And like the morning gladden common space :  
The song shall spread and swell as rivers do,  
And I will teach our youth with skill to woo  
This living lyre, to know its secret will,  
Its fine division of the good and ill.  
So shall men call me sire of harmony,  
And where great Song is, there my life shall be."

Thus glorying as a god beneficent,  
Forth from his solitary joy he went  
To bless mankind. It was at evening,  
When shadows lengthen from each westward thing,  
When imminence of change makes sense more fine  
And light seems holier in its grand decline.  
The fruit-trees wore their studded coronal,  
Earth and her children were at festival,

Glowing as with one heart and one consent—  
Thought, love, trees, rocks, in sweet warm radiance  
    blent.

The tribe of Cain was resting on the ground,  
The various ages wreathed in one broad round.  
Here lay, while children peeped o'er his huge thighs,  
The sinewy man embrowned by centuries ;  
Here the broad-bosomed mother of the strong  
Looked, like Demeter, placid o'er the throng  
Of young lithe forms whose rest was movement  
    too—

Tricks, prattle, nods, and laughs that lightly flow,  
And swayings as of flower-beds where Love blew.  
For all had feasted well upon the flesh  
Of juicy fruits, on nuts, and honey fresh,  
And now their wine was health-bred merriment,  
Which through the generations circling went,  
Leaving none sad, for even father Cain  
Smiled as a Titan might, despising pain.  
Jabal sat climbed on by a playful ring  
Of children, lambs and whelps, whose gambolling,

With tiny hoofs, paws, hands, and dimpled feet,  
Made barks, bleats, laughs, in pretty hubbub meet.  
But Tubal's hammer rang from far away,  
Tubal alone would keep no holiday,  
His furnace must not slack for any feast,  
For of all hardship work he counted least ;  
He scorned all rest but sleep, where every dream  
Made his repose more potent action seem.

Yet with health's nectar some strange thirst was  
    blent,

The fateful growth, the unnamed discontent,  
The inward shaping toward some unborn power,  
Some deeper-breathing act, the being's flower.  
After all gestures, words, and speech of eyes,  
The soul had more to tell, and broke in sighs.  
Then from the east, with glory on his head  
Such as low-slanting beams on corn-waves spread,  
Came Jubal with his lyre : there 'mid the throng,  
Where the blank space was, poured a solemn song,  
Touching his lyre to full harmonic throb  
And measured pulse, with cadences that sob,

Exult and cry, and search the inmost deep  
Where the dark sources of new passion sleep.  
Joy took the air, and took each breathing soul,  
Embracing them in one entrancèd whole,  
Yet thrilled each varying frame to various ends,  
As Spring new-waking through the creature  
sends

Or rage or tenderness ; more plenteous life  
Here breeding dread, and there a fiercer strife.  
He who had lived through twice three centuries,  
Whose months monotonous, like trees on trees  
In hoary forests, stretched a backward maze,  
Dreamed himself dimly through the travelled days  
Till in clear light he paused, and felt the sun  
That warmed him when he was a little one ;  
Felt that true heaven, the recovered past,  
The dear small Known amid the Unknown vast,  
And in that heaven wept. But younger limbs  
Thrilled toward the future, that bright land which  
swims

In western glory, isles and streams and bays,  
Where hidden pleasures float in golden haze.

And in all these the rhythmic influence,  
Sweetly o'ercharging the delighted sense,  
Flowed out in movements, little waves that spread  
Enlarging, till in tidal union led  
The youths and maidens both alike long-tressed,  
By grace-inspiring melody possessed,  
Rose in slow dance, with beauteous floating swerve  
Of limbs and hair, and many a melting curve  
Of ringèd feet swayed by each close-linked palm :  
Then Jubal poured more rapture in his psalm,  
The dance fired music, music fired the dance,  
The glow diffusive lit each countenance, •  
Till all the gazing elders rose and stood  
With glad yet awful shock of that mysterious good.

Even Tubal caught the sound, and wondering came,  
Urging his sooty bulk like smoke-wrapt flame  
Till he could see his brother with the lyre,  
The work for which he lent his furnace-fire  
And diligent hammer, witting nought of this—  
This power in metal shape which made strange  
bliss,

Entering within him like a dream full-fraught  
With new creations finished in a thought.

The sun had sunk, but music still was there,  
And when this ceased, still triumph filled the  
air :

It seemed the stars were shining with delight  
And that no night was ever like this night.  
All clung with praise to Jubal : some besought  
That he would teach them his new skill ; some  
caught,

Swiftly as smiles are caught in looks that meet,  
The tone's melodic change and rhythmic beat :  
'Twas easy following where invention trod—  
All eyes can see when light flows out from God.

And thus did Jubal to his race reveal  
Music their larger soul, where woe and woeal  
Filling the resonant chords, the song, the dance,  
Moved with a wider-wingèd utterance.  
Now many a lyre was fashioned, many a song  
Raised echoes new, old echoes to prolong,

Till things of Jubal's making were so rife,  
"Hearing myself," he said, "hems in my life,  
And I will get me to some far-off land,  
Where higher mountains under heaven stand  
And touch the blue at rising of the stars,  
Whose song they hear where no rough mingling  
mars

The great clear voices. Such lands there must be,  
Where varying forms make varying symphony—  
Where other thunders roll amid the hills,  
Some mightier wind a mightier forest fills  
With other strains through other-shapen boughs;  
Where bees and birds and beasts that hunt or browse  
Will teach me songs I know not. Listening there,  
My life shall grow like trees both tall and fair  
That rise and spread and bloom toward fuller fruit  
each year."

He took a raft, and travelled with the stream  
Southward for many a league, till he might deem  
He saw at last the pillars of the sky,  
Beholding mountains whose white majesty

Rushed through him as new awe, and made new song  
That swept with fuller wave the chords along,  
Weighting his voice with deep religious chime,  
The iteration of slow chant sublime.

It was the region long inhabited  
By all the race of Seth; and Jubal said:  
“Here have I found my thirsty soul’s desire,  
Eastward the hills touch heaven, and evening’s fire  
Flames through deep waters; I will take my rest,  
And feed anew from my great mother’s breast,  
The sky-clasped Earth, whose voices nurture me  
As the flowers’ sweetness doth the honey-bee.”

He lingered wandering for many an age,  
And, sowing music, made high heritage  
For generations far beyond the Flood—  
For the poor late-begotten human brood  
Born to life’s weary brevity and perilous good.

And ever as he travelled he would climb  
The farthest mountain, yet the heavenly chime,  
The mighty tolling of the far-off spheres  
Beating their pathway, never touched his ears.

But wheresoe'er he rose the heavens rose,  
And the far-gazing mountain could disclose  
Nought but a wider earth ; until one height  
Showed him the ocean stretched in liquid light,  
And he could hear its multitudinous roar,  
Its plunge and hiss upon the pebbled shore :  
Then Jubal silent sat, and touched his lyre no more.

He thought, "The world is great, but I am weak,  
And where the sky bends is no solid peak  
To give me footing, but instead, this main—  
Myriads of maddened horses thundering o'er the  
plain.

●

"New voices come to me where'er I roam,  
My heart too widens with its widening home :  
But song grows weaker, and the heart must break  
For lack of voice, or fingers that can wake  
The lyre's full answer ; nay, its chords were all  
Too few to meet the growing spirit's call.  
The former songs seem little, yet no more  
Can soul, hand, voice, with interchanging lore

Tell what the earth is saying unto me :  
The secret is too great, I hear confusedly.

“No farther will I travel : once again  
My brethren I will see, and that fair plain  
Where I and Song were born. There fresh-voiced  
youth  
Will pour my strains with all the early truth  
Which now abides not in my voice and hands,  
But only in the soul, the will that stands  
Helpless to move. My tribe remembering  
Will cry ‘Tis he!’ and run to greet me, welcom-  
ing.”

The way was weary. Many a date-palm grew,  
And shook out clustered gold against the blue,  
While Jubal, guided by the steadfast spheres,  
Sought the dear home of those first eager years,  
When, with fresh vision fed, the fuller will  
Took living outward shape in pliant skill ;  
For still he hoped to find the former things,  
And the warm gladness recognition brings.

His footsteps erred among the mazy woods  
And long illusive sameness of the floods,  
Winding and wandering. Through far regions,  
strange

With Gentile homes and faces, did he range,  
And left his music in their memory,  
And left at last, when nought besides would free  
His homeward steps from clinging hands and cries,  
The ancient lyre. And now in ignorant eyes  
No sign remained of Jubal, Lamech's son,  
That mortal frame wherein was first begun  
The immortal life of song. His withered brow  
Pressed over eyes that held no lightning now,  
His locks streamed whiteness on the hurrying air,  
The unresting soul had worn itself quite bare  
Of beauteous token, as the outworn might  
Of oaks slow dying, gaunt in summer's light.  
His full deep voice toward thinnest treble ran :  
He was the rune-writ story of a man.

And so at last he neared the well-known land,  
Could see the hills in ancient order stand

With friendly faces whose familiar gaze  
Looked through the sunshine of his childish days ;  
Knew the deep-shadowed folds of hanging woods,  
And seemed to see the self-same insect broods  
Whirling and quivering o'er the flowers—to hear  
The self-same cuckoo making distance near.  
Yea, the dear Earth, with mother's constancy,  
Met and embraced him, and said, "Thou art he !  
This was thy cradle, here my breast was thine,  
Where feeding, thou didst all thy life entwine  
With my sky-wedded life in heritage divine."

•

But wending ever through the watered plain,  
Firm not to rest save in the home of Cain,  
He saw dread Change, with dubious face and cold  
That never kept a welcome for the old,  
Like some strange heir upon the hearth, arise  
Saying "This home is mine." He thought his eyes  
Mocked all deep memories, as things new made,  
Usurping sense, make old things shrink and fade  
And seem ashamed to meet the staring day.  
His memory saw a small foot-trodden way,

His eyes a broad far-stretching paven road  
Bordered with many a tomb and fair abode ;  
The little city that once nestled low  
As buzzing groups about some central glow,  
Spread like a murmuring crowd o'er plain and steep,  
Or monster huge in heavy-breathing sleep.  
His heart grew faint, and tremblingly he sank  
Close by the wayside on a weed-grown bank,  
Not far from where a new-raised temple stood,  
Sky-roofed, and fragrant with wrought cedar wood.  
The morning sun was high ; his rays fell hot  
On this hap-chosen, dusty, common spot, •  
On the dry-withered grass and withered man :  
That wondrous frame where melody began  
Lay as a tomb defaced that no eye cared to scan.

But while he sank far music reached his ear.  
He listened until wonder silenced fear  
And gladness wonder ; for the broadening stream  
Of sound advancing was his early dream,  
Brought like fulfilment of forgotten prayer ;  
As if his soul, breathed out upon the air,

Had held the invisible seeds of harmony  
Quick with the various strains of life to be.  
He listened : the sweet mingled difference  
With charm alternate took the meeting sense ;  
Then bursting like some shield-broad lily red,  
Sudden and near the trumpet's notes out-spread,  
And soon his eyes could see the metal flower,  
Shining upturned, out on the morning pour  
Its incense audible ; could see a train  
From out the street slow-winding on the plain  
With lyres and cymbals, flutes and psalteries,  
While men, youths, maids, in concert sang to these  
With various throat, or in succession poured,  
Or in full volume mingled. But one word  
Ruled each recurrent rise and answering fall,  
As when the multitudes adoring call  
On some great name divine, their common soul,  
The common need, love, joy, that knits them in one  
whole.

The word was "Jubal !" . . . "Jubal " filled the air  
And seemed to ride aloft, a spirit there,

Creator of the quire, the full-fraught strain  
That grateful rolled itself to him again.  
The aged man adust upon the bank—  
Whom no eye saw—at first with rapture drank  
The bliss of music, then, with swelling heart,  
Felt, this was his own being's greater part,  
The universal joy once born in him.  
But when the train, with living face and limb  
And vocal breath, came nearer and more near,  
The longing grew that they should hold him dear ;  
Him, Lamech's son, whom all their fathers knew,  
The breathing Jubal—him, to whom their love was  
due.

•  
All was forgotten but the burning need  
To claim his fuller self, to claim the deed  
That lived away from him, and grew apart,  
While he as from a tomb, with lonely heart,  
Warmed by no meeting glance, no hand that pressed,  
Lay chill amid the life his life had blessed.  
What though his song should spread from man's  
small race  
Out through the myriad worlds that people space,

And make the heavens one joy-diffusing quire?—  
Still 'mid that vast would throb the keen desire  
Of this poor aged flesh, this eventide,  
This twilight soon in darkness to subside,  
This little pulse of self that, having glowed  
Through thrice three centuries, and divinely strowed  
The light of music through the vague of sound,  
Ached with its smallness still in good that had no  
    bound.

For no eye saw him, while with loving pride  
Each voice with each in praise of Jubal vied.  
Must he in conscious trance, dumb, helpless lie  
While all that ardent kindred passed him by?  
His flesh cried out to live with living men  
And join that soul which to the inward ken  
Of all the hymning train was present there.  
Strong passion's daring sees not aught to dare :  
The frost-locked starkness of his frame low-bent,  
His voice's penury of tones long spent,  
He felt not ; all his being leaped in flame  
To meet his kindred as they onward came

Slackening and wheeling toward the temple's  
face :

He rushed before them to the glittering space,  
And, with a strength that was but strong desire,  
Cried, "I am Jubal, I! . . . I made the lyre!"

The tones amid a lake of silence fell  
Broken and strained, as if a feeble bell  
Had tuneless pealed the triumph of a land  
To listening crowds in expectation spanned.  
Sudden came showers of laughter on that lake ;  
They spread along the train from front to wake  
In one great storm of merriment, while he  
Shrank doubting whether he could Jubal be,  
And not a dream of Jubal, whose rich vein  
Of passionate music came with that dream-pain  
Wherein the sense slips off from each loved thing  
And all appearance is mere vanishing.  
But ere the laughter died from out the rear,  
Anger in front saw profanation near ;  
Jubal was but a name in each man's faith  
For glorious power untouched by that slow death

Which creeps with creeping time; this too, the  
spot,

And this the day, it must be crime to blot,

Even with scoffing at a madman's lie :

Jubal was not a name to wed with mockery.

Two rushed upon him : two, the most devout

In honour of great Jubal, thrust him out,

And beat him with their flutes. 'Twas little  
need ;

He strove not, cried not, but with tottering speed,

As if the scorn and howls were driving wind

That urged his body, serving so the mind

Which could but shrink and yearn, he sought the  
screen

Of thorny thickets, and there fell unseen.

The immortal name of Jubal filled the sky,

While Jubal lonely laid him down to die.

He said within his soul, " This is the end :

O'er all the earth to where the heavens bend

And hem men's travel, I have breathed my soul :

I lie here now the remnant of that whole,

The embers of a life, a lonely pain ;  
As far-off rivers to my thirst were vain,  
So of my mighty years nought comes to me  
again.

“Is the day sinking? Softest coolness springs  
From something round me : dewy shadowy wings  
Enclose me all around—no, not above—  
Is moonlight there? I see a face of love,  
Fair as sweet music when my heart was strong :  
Yea—art thou come again to me, great Song?”

•

The face bent over him like silver night  
In long-remembered summers ; that calm light  
Of days which shine in firmaments of thought,  
That past unchangeable, from change still wrought.  
And gentlest tones were with the vision blent :  
He knew not if that gaze the music sent,  
Or music that calm gaze : to hear, to see,  
Was but one undivided ecstasy :  
The raptured senses melted into one,  
And parting life a moment's freedom won

From in and outer, as a little child  
Sits on a bank and sees blue heavens mild  
Down in the water, and forgets its limbs,  
And knoweth nought save the blue heaven that  
swims.

“Jubal,” the face said, “I am thy loved Past,  
The soul that makes thee one from first to last.  
I am the angel of thy life and death,  
Thy outbreathed being drawing its last breath.  
Am I not thine alone, a dear dead bride  
Who blest thy lot above all men’s beside?  
Thy bride whom thou wouldst never change, nor  
take  
Any bride living, for that dead one’s sake?  
Was I not all thy yearning and delight,  
Thy chosen search, thy senses’ beauteous Right,  
Which still had been the hunger of thy frame  
In central heaven, hadst thou been still the same?  
Wouldst thou have asked aught else from any  
god—

Whether with gleaming feet on earth he trod

Or thundered through the skies — aught else for  
share

Of mortal good, than in thy soul to bear  
The growth of song, and feel the sweet unrest  
Of the world's spring-tide in thy conscious breast?  
No, thou hadst grasped thy lot with all its  
pain,

Nor loosed it any painless lot to gain  
Where music's voice was silent; for thy fate  
Was human music's self incorporate:  
Thy senses' keenness and thy passionate strife  
Were flesh of *her* flesh and her womb of life.<sup>•</sup>  
And greatly hast thou lived, for not alone  
With hidden raptures were her secrets shown,  
Buried within thee, as the purple light  
Of gems may sleep in solitary night;  
But thy expanding joy was still to give,  
And with the generous air in song to live,  
Feeding the wave of ever-widening bliss  
Where fellowship means equal perfectness.  
And on the mountains in thy wandering  
Thy feet were beautiful as blossomed spring,

That turns the leafless wood to love's glad  
home,

For with thy coming Melody was come.

This was thy lot, to feel, create, bestow,

And that immeasurable life to know

From which the fleshly self falls shrivelled, dead,

A seed primeval that has forests bred.

It is the glory of the heritage

Thy life has left, that makes thy outcast age :

Thy limbs shall lie dark, tombless on this sod,

Because thou shinest in man's soul, a god,

Who found and gave new passion and new joy

That nought but Earth's destruction can destroy.

Thy gifts to give was thine of men alone :

'Twas but in giving that thou couldst atone

For too much wealth amid their poverty."—

The words seemed melting into symphony,

The wings upbore him, and the gazing song

Was floating him the heavenly space along,

Where mighty harmonies all gently fell

Through veiling vastness, like the far-off bell,

Till, ever onward through the choral blue,  
He heard more faintly and more faintly knew,  
Quitting mortality, a quenched sun-wave,  
The All-creating Presence for his grave.

1869.

AGATHA

## A G A T H A.

---

COME with me to the mountain, not where rocks  
Soar harsh above the troops of hurrying pines,  
But where the earth spreads soft and rounded breasts  
To feed her children ; where the generous hills  
Lift a green isle betwixt the sky and plain  
To keep some Old World things aloof from change.  
Here too 'tis hill and hollow : new-born streams  
With sweet enforcement, joyously compelled  
Like laughing children, hurry down the steeps,  
And make a dimpled chase athwart the stones ;  
Pine woods are black upon the heights, the slopes  
Are green with pasture, and the bearded corn

Fringes the blue above the sudden ridge :  
A little world whose round horizon cuts  
This isle of hills with heaven for a sea,  
Save in clear moments when southwestward gleams  
France by the Rhine, melting anon to haze.  
The monks of old chose here their still retreat,  
And called it by the Blessed Virgin's name,  
Sancta Maria, which the peasant's tongue,  
Speaking from out the parent's heart that turns  
All loved things into little things, has made  
Sanct Märgen,—Holy little Mary, dear  
As all the sweet home things she smiles upon,  
The children and the cows, the apple-trees,  
The cart, the plough, all named with that caress  
Which feigns them little, easy to be held,  
Familiar to the eyes and hand and heart.  
What though a Queen? She puts her crown  
    away  
And with her little Boy wears common clothes,  
Caring for common wants, remembering  
That day when good Saint Joseph left his work  
To marry her with humble trust sublime.

The monks are gone, their shadows fall no more  
Tall-frocked and cowed athwart the evening fields  
At milking-time ; their silent corridors  
Are turned to homes of bare-armed, aproned men,  
Who toil for wife and children. But the bells,  
Pealing on high from two quaint convent towers,  
Still ring the Catholic signals, summoning  
To grave remembrance of the larger life  
That bears our own, like perishable fruit  
Upon its heaven-wide branches. At their sound  
The shepherd boy far off upon the hill,  
The workers with the saw and at the forge, •  
The triple generation round the hearth,—  
Grandames and mothers and the flute-voiced girls,—  
Fall on their knees and send forth prayerful cries  
To the kind Mother with the little Boy,  
Who pleads for helpless men against the storm,  
Lightning and plagues and all terrific shapes  
Of power supreme.  
Within the prettiest hollow of these hills,  
Just as you enter it, upon the slope  
Stands a low cottage neighboured cheerily

By running water, which, at farthest end  
Of the same hollow, turns a heavy mill,  
And feeds the pasture for the miller's cows,  
Blanchi and Nägeli, Veilchen and the rest,  
Matrons with faces as Griselda mild,  
Coming at call. And on the farthest height  
A little tower looks out above the pines  
Where mounting you will find a sanctuary  
Open and still ; without, the silent crowd  
Of heaven-planted, incense-mingling flowers ;  
Within, the altar where the Mother sits  
'Mid votive tablets hung from far-off years  
By peasants succoured in the peril of fire,  
Fever, or flood, who thought that Mary's love,  
Willing but not omnipotent, had stood  
Between their lives and that dread power which slew  
Their neighbour at their side. The chapel bell  
Will melt to gentlest music ere it reach  
That cottage on the slope, whose garden gate  
Has caught the rose-tree boughs and stands ajar ;  
So does the door, to let the sunbeams in ;  
For in the slanting sunbeams angels come

And visit Agatha who dwells within,—  
Old Agatha, whose cousins Kate and Nell  
Are housed by her in Love and Duty's name,  
They being feeble, with small withered wits,  
And she believing that the higher gift  
Was given to be shared. So Agatha  
Shares her one room, all neat on afternoons,  
As if some memory were sacred there  
And everything within the four low walls  
An honoured relic.

One long summer's day

An angel entered at the rose-hung gate, •  
With skirts pale blue, a brow to quench the pearl,  
Hair soft and blonde • as infants', plenteous  
As hers who made the wavy lengths once speak  
The grateful worship of a rescued soul.  
The angel paused before the open door  
To give good day. "Come in," said Agatha.  
I followed close, and watched and listened there.  
The angel was a lady, noble, young,  
Taught in all seemliness that fits a court,  
All lore that shapes the mind to delicate use,

Yet quiet, lowly, as a meek white dove  
That with its presence teaches gentleness.  
Men called her Countess Linda ; little girls  
In Freiburg town, orphans whom she caressed,  
Said Mamma Linda : yet her years were few,  
Her outward beauties all in budding time,  
Her virtues the aroma of the plant  
That dwells in all its being, root, stem, leaf,  
And waits not ripeness.

“ Sit,” said Agatha.

Her cousins were at work in neighbouring homes  
But yet she was not lonely ; all things round  
Seemed filled with noiseless yet responsive life,  
As of a child at breast that gently clings :  
Not sunlight only or the breathing flowers  
Or the swift shadows of the birds and bees,  
But all the household goods, which, polished fair  
By hands that cherished them for service done,  
Shone as with glad content. The wooden beams  
Dark and yet friendly, easy to be reached,  
Bore three white crosses for a speaking sign ;  
The walls had little pictures hung a-row,

Telling the stories of Saint Ursula,  
And Saint Elizabeth, the lowly queen ;  
And on the bench that served for table too,  
Skirting the wall to save the narrow space,  
There lay the Catholic books, inherited  
From those old times when printing still was  
    young

With stout-limbed promise, like a sturdy boy.  
And in the farthest corner stood the bed  
Where o'er the pillow hung two pictures wreathed  
With fresh-plucked ivy: one the Virgin's death,  
And one her flowering tomb, while high above  
She smiling bends and lets her girdle down  
For ladder to the soul that cannot trust  
In life which outlasts burial.   Agatha  
Sat at her knitting, aged, upright, slim,  
And spoke her welcome with mild dignity.  
She kept the company of kings and queens  
And mitred saints who sat below the feet  
Of Francis with the ragged frock and wounds ;  
And Rank for her meant Duty, various,  
Yet equal in its worth, done worthily.

Command was service ; humblest service done  
By willing and discerning souls was glory.

Fair Countess Linda sat upon the bench,  
Close fronting the old knitter, and they talked  
With sweet antiphony of young and old.

AGATHA.

You like our valley, lady ? I am glad  
You thought it well to come again. But rest—  
The walk is long from Master Michael's inn.

COUNTESS LINDA.

Yes, but no walk is prettier.

AGATHA.

It is true :

There lacks no blessing here, the waters all  
Have virtues like the garments of the Lord,  
And heal much sickness ; then, the crops and cows  
Flourish past speaking, and the garden flowers,  
Pink, blue, and purple, 'tis a joy to see  
How they yield honey for the singing bees.  
I would the whole world were as good a home.

COUNTESS LINDA.

And you are well off, Agatha?—your friends  
Left you a certain bread : is it not so ?

AGATHA.

Not so at all, dear lady. I had nought,  
Was a poor orphan ; but I came to tend  
Here in this house, an old afflicted pair,  
Who wore out slowly ; and the last who died,  
Full thirty years ago, left me this roof  
And all the household stuff. It was great wealth ;  
And so I had a home for Kate and Nell.

•

COUNTESS LINDA.

But how, then, have you earned your daily bread  
These thirty years ?

AGATHA.

O, that is easy earning.

We help the neighbours, and our bit and sup  
Is never failing : they have work for us

In house and field, all sorts of odds and ends,  
Patching and mending, turning o'er the hay,  
Holding sick children,—there is always work ;  
And they are very good,—the neighbours are :  
Weigh not our bits of work with weight and scale,  
But glad themselves with giving us good shares  
Of meat and drink ; and in the big farm-house  
When cloth comes home from weaving, the good wife  
Cuts me a piece,—this very gown,—and says :  
“ Here, Agatha, you old maid, you have time  
To pray for Hans who is gone soldiering :  
The saints might help him, and they have much  
to do,

“Twere well they were besought to think of him.”

She spoke half jesting, but I pray, I pray  
For poor young Hans. I take it much to heart  
That other people are worse off than I,—  
I ease my soul with praying for them all.

COUNTESS LINDA.

That is your way of singing, Agatha ;  
Just as the nightingales pour forth sad songs,

And when they reach men's ears they make  
men's hearts  
Feel the more kindly.

AGATHA.

Nay, I cannot sing :  
My voice is hoarse, and oft I think my prayers  
Are foolish, feeble things ; for Christ is good  
Whether I pray or not,—the Virgin's heart  
Is kinder far than mine ; and then I stop  
And feel I can do nought towards helping men,  
Till out it comes, like tears that will not hold,  
And I must pray again for all the world.  
'Tis good to me,—I mean the neighbours are :  
To Kate and Nell too. I have money saved  
To go on pilgrimage the second time.

COUNTESS LINDA.

And do you mean to go on pilgrimage  
With all your years to carry, Agatha?

AGATHA.

The years are light, dear lady : 'tis my sins  
Are heavier than I would. And I shall go  
All the way to Einsiedeln with that load :  
I need to work it off.

COUNTESS LINDA.

What sort of sins.

Dear Agatha ? I think they must be small.

AGATHA.

Nay, but they may be greater than I know ;  
'Tis but dim light I see by. So I try  
All ways I know of to be cleansed and pure.  
I would not sink where evil spirits are.  
There's perfect goodness somewhere : so I strive.

COUNTESS LINDA.

You were the better for that pilgrimage  
You made before ? The shrine is beautiful ;  
And then you saw fresh country all the way.

## AGATHA.

Yes, that is true. And ever since that time  
The world seems greater, and the Holy Church  
More wonderful. The blessed pictures all,  
The heavenly images with books and wings,  
Are company to me through the day and night.  
The time ! the time ! It never seemed far back,  
Only to father's father and his kin  
That lived before him. But the time stretched out  
After that pilgrimage : I seemed to see  
Far back, and yet I knew time lay behind,  
As there are countries lying still behind  
The highest mountains, there in Switzerland.  
O, it is great to go on pilgrimage !

## COUNTESS LINDA.

Perhaps some neighbours will be pilgrims too,  
And you can start together in a band.

## AGATHA.

Not from these hills : people are busy here,  
The beasts want tendance. One who is not missed

Can go and pray for others who must work.  
I owe it to all neighbours, young and old ;  
For they are good past thinking,—lads and girls  
Given to mischief, merry naughtiness,  
Quiet it, as the hedgehogs smooth their spines,  
For fear of hurting poor old Agatha.  
'Tis pretty: why, the cherubs in the sky  
Look young and merry, and the angels play  
On citherns, lutes, and all sweet instruments.  
I would have young things merry. See the Lord!  
A little baby playing with the birds ;  
And how the Blessed Mother smiles at him.

COUNTESS LINDA.

I think you are too happy, Agatha,  
To care for heaven. Earth contents you well.

AGATHA.

Nay, nay, I shall be called, and I shall go  
Right willingly. I shall get helpless, blind,  
Be like an old stalk to be plucked away :  
The garden must be cleared for young spring plants.

'Tis home beyond the grave, the most are there,  
All those we pray to, all the Church's lights,—  
And poor old souls are welcome in their rags :  
One sees it by the pictures. Good Saint Ann,  
The Virgin's mother, she is very old,  
And had her troubles with her husband too.  
Poor Kate and Nell are younger far than I,  
But they will have this roof to cover them.  
I shall go willingly; and willingness  
Makes the yoke easy and the burden light.

COUNTESS LINDA. •

When you go southward in your pilgrimage,  
Come to see me in Freiburg, Agatha.  
Where you have friends you should not go to inns.

AGATHA.

Yes, I will gladly come to see you, lady.  
And you will give me sweet hay for a bed,  
And in the morning I shall wake betimes  
And start when all the birds begin to sing.

COUNTESS LINDA.

You wear your smart clothes on the pilgrimage,  
Such pretty clothes as all the women here  
Keep by them for their best: a velvet cap  
And collar golden-broidered? They look well  
On old and young alike.

AGATHA.

Nay, I have none.—

Never had better clothes than these you see.  
Good clothes are pretty, but one sees them best  
When others wear them, and I somehow thought  
'Twas not worth while. I had so many things  
More than some neighbours, I was partly shy  
Of wearing better clothes than they, and now  
I am so old and custom is so strong  
'Twould hurt me sore to put on finery.

COUNTESS LINDA.

Your grey hair is a crown, dear Agatha.  
Shake hands; good-bye. The sun is going down,  
And I must see the glory from the hill.

I stayed among those hills ; and oft heard more  
Of Agatha. I liked to hear her name,  
As that of one half grandame and half saint,  
Uttered with reverent playfulness. The lads  
And younger men all called her mother, aunt,  
Or granny, with their pet diminutives,  
And bade their lasses and their brides behave  
Right well to one who surely made a link  
'Twixt faulty folk and God by loving both :  
Not one but counted service done by her,  
Asking no pay save just her daily bread.  
At feasts and weddings, when they passed in groups  
Along the vale, and the good country wine,  
Being vocal in them, made them quire along  
In quaintly mingled mirth and piety,  
They fain must jest and play some friendly trick  
On three old maids ; but when the moment came  
Always they bated breath and made their sport  
Gentle as feather-stroke, that Agatha  
Might like the waking for the love it showed.  
Their song made happy music 'mid the hills,  
For nature tuned their race to harmony,

And poet Hans, the tailor, wrote them songs  
That grew from out their life, as crocuses  
From out the meadow's moistness. 'Twas his song  
They oft sang, wending homeward from a feast,—  
The song I give you. It brings in, you see,  
Their gentle jesting with the three old maids.

Midnight by the chapel bell !  
Homeward, homeward all, farewell !  
I with you, and you with me,  
•Miles are short with company.

*Heart of Mary, bless the way,  
Keep us all by night and day !*

Moon and stars at feast with night  
Now have drunk their fill of light.  
Home they hurry, making time  
Trot apace, like merry rhyme.

*Heart of Mary, mystic rose,  
Send us all a sweet repose !*

Swiftly through the wood down hill,  
 Run till you can hear the mill.  
 Toni's ghost is wandering now,  
 Shaped just like a snow-white cow.

*Heart of Mary, morning star,  
 Ward off danger, near or far !*

Toni's waggon with its load  
 Fell and crushed him in the road  
 'Twixt these pine-trees. Never fear !  
 Give a neighbour's ghost good cheer. •

*Holy Babe, our God and Brother,  
 Bind us fast to one another !*

Hark ! the mill is at its work,  
 Now we pass beyond the murk  
 To the hollow, where the moon  
 Makes her silvery afternoon.

*Good Saint Joseph, faithful spouse,  
 Help us all to keep our vows !*

Here the three old maidens dwell,  
 Agatha and Kate and Nell;  
 See, the moon shines on the thatch,  
 We will go and shake the latch.

*Heart of Mary, cup of joy,  
 Give us mirth without alloy !*

Hush, 'tis here, no noise, sing low,  
 Rap with gentle knuckles—so !  
 Like the little tapping birds,  
 On the door ; then sing good words.  
*Meek Saint Anna, old and fair,  
 Hallow all the snow-white hair !*

Little maidens old, sweet dreams !  
 Sleep one sleep till morning beams.  
 Mothers ye, who help us all,  
 Quick at hand, if ill befall.  
*Holy Gabriel, lily-laden,  
 Bless the aged mother-maiden !*

Forward, mount the broad hillside  
Swift as soldiers when they ride.  
See the two towers how they peep,  
Round-capped giants, o'er the steep.

*Heart of Mary, by thy sorrow,  
Keep us upright through the morrow!*

Now they rise quite suddenly  
Like a man from bended knee,  
Now Saint Märgen is in sight,  
Here the roads branch off—good night!

*Heart of Mary, by thy grace,  
Give us with the saints a place!*

A R M G A R T

# ARMGART.

---

## SCENE I.

*A Salon lit with lamps and ornamented with green plants. An open piano, with many scattered sheets of music. Bronze busts of Beethoven and Gluck on pillars opposite each other. A small table spread with supper. To FRÄULEIN WALPURGA, who advances with a slight lameness of gait from an adjoining room, enters GRAF DORNBERG at the opposite door in a travelling dress.*

GRAF.

Good morning, Fräulein!

WALPURGA.

What, so soon returned?

I feared your mission kept you still at Prague.

GRAF.

But now arrived! You see my travelling dress.

I hurried from the panting, roaring steam

Like any courier of embassy

Who hides the fiends of war within his bag.

WALPURGA.

You know that Armgart sings to-night?

GRAF.

Has sung!

'Tis close on half-past nine. The *Orpheus*

Lasts not so long. Her spirits—were they high?

Was Leo confident?

WALPURGA.

He only feared

Some tameness at beginning. Let the house  
Once ring, he said, with plaudits, she is safe.

GRAF.

And Armgart?

WALPURGA.

She was stiller than her wont.

But once, at some such trivial word of mine,  
As that the highest prize might yet be won  
By her who took the second—she was roused.  
“For me,” she said, “I triumph or I fail.  
I never strove for any second prize.”

GRAF.

Poor human-hearted singing-bird! She bears  
Cæsar’s ambition in her delicate breast,  
And nought to still it with but quivering song!

## WALPURGA.

I had not for the world been there to-night :  
Unreasonable dread oft chills me more  
Than any reasonable hope can warm.

## GRAF.

You have a rare affection for your cousin ;  
As tender as a sister's.

## WALPURGA.

Nay, I fear  
My love is little more than what I felt  
For happy stories when I was a child.  
She fills my life that would be empty else,  
And lifts my nought to value by her side.

## GRAF.

She is reason good enough, or seems to be,  
Why all were born whose being ministers  
To her completeness. Is it most her voice  
Subdues us ? or her instinct exquisite,

Informing each old strain with some new grace  
 Which takes our sense like any natural good?  
 Or most her spiritual energy  
 That sweeps us in the current of her song?

## WALPURGA.

I know not. Losing either, we should lose  
 That whole we call our Armgart. For herself,  
 She often wonders what her life had been  
 Without that voice for channel to her soul.  
 She says, it must have leaped through all her  
 limbs—

•

Made her a Mænad—made her snatch a brand  
 And fire some forest, that her rage might mount  
 In crashing roaring flames through half a land,  
 Leaving her still and patient for a while.  
 'Poor wretch!' she says, of any murderess—  
 The world was cruel, and she could not  
 sing:

carry my revenges in my throat;  
 love in singing, and am loved again."

GRAF.

Mere mood! I cannot yet believe it more.  
Too much ambition has unwomaned her;  
But only for a while. Her nature hides  
One half its treasures by its very wealth,  
Taxing the hours to show it.

WALPURGA.

Hark! she comes.

*Enter LEO with a wreath in his hand, holding the door  
open for ARMGART, who wears a furred mantle and  
hood. She is followed by her maid, carrying an  
armful of bouquets.*

LEO.

Place for the queen of song!

GRAF (*advancing towards ARMGART, who throws off  
her hood and mantle, and shows a star of brilliants  
in her hair*).

A triumph, then.

You will not be a niggard of your joy  
And chide the eagerness that came to share it.

## ARMGART.

O kind ! you hastened your return for me.  
I would you had been there to hear me sing !  
Walpurga, kiss me : never tremble more  
Lest Armgart's wing should fail her. She has .  
found  
This night the region where her rapture breathes—  
Pouring her passion on the air made live  
With human heart-throbs. Tell them, Leo, tell them  
How I outsang your hope and made you cry  
Because Gluck could not hear me. That was folly !  
He sang, not listened : every linkèd note  
Was his immortal pulse that stirred in mine,  
And all my gladness is but part of him.  
Give me the wreath.

[*She crowns the bust of GLUCK.*

LEO (*sardonically*).

Ay, ay, but mark you this :

It was not part of him—that trill you made  
In spite of me and reason !

ARMGART.

You were wrong—

Dear Leo, you were wrong : the house was held  
As if a storm were listening with delight  
And hushed its thunder.

LEO.

Will you ask the house  
To teach you singing ? Quit your *Orpheus* then,  
And sing in farces grown to operas,  
Where all the prurience of the full-fed mob  
Is tickled with melodic impudence :  
Jerk forth burlesque bravuras, square your arms  
Akimbo with a tavern wench's grace,  
And set the splendid compass of your voice  
To lyric jigs. Go to ! I thought you meant  
To be an artist—lift your audience  
To see your vision, not trick forth a show  
To please the grossest taste of grossest numbers.

ARMGART (*taking up LEO's hand, and kissing it*).

Pardon, good Leo, I am penitent.

I will do penance : sing a hundred trills

Into a deep-dug grave, then burying them

As one did Midas' secret, rid myself

Of naughty exultation. O I trilled

At nature's prompting, like the nightingales.

Go scold them, dearest Leo.

LEO.

I stop my ears.

Nature in Gluck inspiring Orpheus,

Has done with nightingales. Are bird-beaks lips ?

GRAF.

Truce to rebukes ! Tell us—who were not there—

The double drama : how the expectant house

Took the first notes.

WALPURGA (*turning from her occupation of decking the  
room with the flowers*).

Yes, tell us all, dear Armgart.

Did you feel tremors? Leo, how did she look?  
Was there a cheer to greet her?

LEO.

Not a sound.

She walked like Orpheus in his solitude,  
And seemed to see nought but what no man saw.  
'Twas famous. Not the Schroeder-Devrient  
Had done it better. But your blessed public  
Had never any judgment in cold blood—  
Thinks all perhaps were better otherwise,  
Till rapture brings a reason.

ARMGART (*scornfully*).

I knew that!

The women whispered, "Not a pretty face!"  
The men, "Well, well, a goodly length of limb:  
She bears the chiton."—It were all the same  
Were I the Virgin Mother and my stage  
The opening heavens at the Judgment-day:  
Gossips would peep, jog elbows, rate the price  
Of such a woman in the social mart.

What were the drama of the world to them,  
Unless they felt the hell-*phong*?

LEO.

Peace, now, peace!

I hate my phrases to be smothered o'er  
With sauce of paraphrase, my sober tune  
Made bass to rambling trebles, showering down  
In endless demi-semi-quavers.

ARMGART (*taking a bon-bon from the table, uplifting  
it before putting it into her mouth, and turning  
away*).

Mum!

GRAF.

Yes, tell us all the glory, leave the blame.

WALPURGA.

You first, dear Leo—what you saw and heard;  
Then Armgart—she must tell us what she felt.

LEO.

Well! The first notes came clearly firmly forth.  
And I was easy, for behind those rills  
I knew there was a fountain. I could see  
The house was breathing gently, heads were still;  
Parrot opinion was struck meekly mute,  
And human hearts were swelling. Armgart  
stood  
As if she had been new-created there  
And found her voice which found a melody.  
The minx! Gluck had not written, nor I taught:  
Orpheus was Armgart, Armgart Orpheus.  
Well, well, all through the *scena* I could feel  
The silence tremble now, now poise itself  
With added weight of feeling, till at last  
Delight o'er-toppled it. The final note  
Had happy drowning in the unloosed roar  
That surged and ebbed and ever surged again,  
Till expectation kept it pent awhile  
Ere Orpheus returned. Pfui! He was changed:  
My demi-god was pale, had downcast eyes

That quivered like a bride's who fain would send  
Backward the rising tear.

ARMGART (*advancing, but then turning away, as if  
to check her speech*).

I *was* a bride,  
As nuns are at their spousals.

LEO.

Ay, my lady,  
That moment will not come again : applause  
May come and plenty ; but the first, first draught !  
*(Snaps his fingers.)*

Music has sounds for it—I know no words.  
I felt it once myself when they performed  
My overture to Sintram. Well ! 'tis strange,  
We know not pain from pleasure in such joy.

ARMGART (*turning quickly*).

Oh, pleasure has cramped dwelling in our souls,

And when full Being comes must call on pain  
To lend it liberal space.

WALPURGA.

I hope the house  
Kept a reserve of plaudits : I am jealous  
Lest they had dulled themselves for coming good  
That should have seemed the better and the  
best.

LEO.

No, 'twas a revel where they had but quaffed  
Their opening cup. I thank the artist's star,  
His audience keeps not sober : once afire,  
They flame towards climax, though his merit hold  
But fairly even.

ARMGART (*her hand on LEO's arm*).

Now, now, confess the truth :

I sang still better to the very end—

All save the trill ; I give that up to you,

To bite and growl at. Why, you said yourself,  
Each time I sang, it seemed new doors were oped  
That you might hear heaven clearer.

LEO (*shaking his finger*).

I was raving.

ARMGART.

I am not glad with that mean vanity  
Which knows no good beyond its appetite  
Full feasting upon praise ! I am only glad,  
Being praised for what I know is worth the praise ;  
Glad of the proof that I myself have part  
In what I worship ! At the last applause—  
Seeming a roar of tropic winds that tossed .  
The handkerchiefs and many-coloured flowers,  
Falling like shattered rainbows all around—  
Think you I felt myself a *prima donna* ?  
No, but a happy spiritual star  
Such as old Dante saw, wrought in a rose  
Of light in Paradise, whose only self  
Was consciousness of glory wide-diffused,

Music, life, power—I moving in the midst  
With a sublime necessity of good.

LEO (*with a shrug*).

I thought it was a *prima donna* came  
Within the side-scenes ; ay, and she was proud  
To find the bouquet from the royal box  
Enclosed a jewel-case, and proud to wear  
A star of brilliants, quite an earthly star,  
Valued by thalers. Come, my lady, own  
Ambition has five senses, and a self  
That gives it good warm lodging when it sinks  
Plump down from ecstasy. ~

ARMGART.

Own it? why not?

Am I a sage whose words must fall like seed  
Silently buried toward a far-off spring?  
I sing to living men and my effect  
Is like the summer's sun, that ripens corn  
Or now or never. If the world brings me gifts,  
Gold, incense, myrrh—'twill be the needful sign

That I have stirred it as the high year stirs  
Before I sink to winter.

GRAF.

Ecstasies

Are short—most happily ! We should but lose  
Were Armgart borne too commonly and long  
Out of the self that charms us. Could I choose,  
She were less apt to soar beyond the reach  
Of woman's foibles, innocent vanities,  
Fondness for trifles like that pretty star  
Twinkling beside her cloud of ebon hair. •

•  
ARMGART (*taking out the gem and looking at it*).

This little star ! I would it were the seed  
Of a whole Milky Way, if such bright shimmer  
Were the sole speech men told their rapture with  
At Armgart's music. Shall I turn aside  
From splendours which flash out the glow I make,  
And live to make, in all the chosen breasts  
Of half a Continent ? No, may it come,  
That splendour ! May the day be near when men

Think much to let my horses draw me home,  
 And new lands welcome me upon their beach,  
 Loving me for my fame. That is the truth  
 Of what I wish, nay, yearn for. Shall I lie?  
 Pretend to seek obscurity—to sing  
 In hope of disregard? A vile pretence!  
 And blasphemy besides. For what is fame  
 But the benignant strength of One, transformed  
 To joy of Many? Tributes, plaudits come  
 As necessary breathing of such joy;  
 And may they come to me!

GRAF.

The auguries

Point clearly that way. Is it no offence  
 To wish the eagle's wing may find repose,  
 As feebler wings do, in a quiet nest?  
 Or has the taste of fame already turned  
 The Woman to a Muse . . .

LEO (*going to the table*).

Who needs no supper.

I am her priest, ready to eat her share  
Of good Walpurga's offerings.

WALPURGA.

Armgar, come.

Graf, will you come?

GRAF.

Thanks, I play truant here,  
And must retrieve my self-indulged delay.  
But will the Muse receive a votary  
At any hour to-morrow?

ARMGART.

Any hour  
After rehearsal, after twelve at noon.

## SCENE II.

*The same Salon, morning. ARMGART seated, in her bonnet and walking dress. The GRAF standing near her against the piano.*

GRAF.

Armgar, to many minds the first success  
Is reason for desisting. I have known  
A man so versatile, he tried all arts,  
But when in each by turns he had achieved  
Just so much mastery as made men say,  
“He could be king here if he would,” he threw  
The lauded skill aside. He hates, said one,  
The level of achieved pre-eminence,  
He must be conquering still; but others said——

## ARMGART.

The truth, I hope : he had a meagre soul,  
Holding no depth where love could root itself.  
“Could if he would?” True greatness ever wills—  
It lives in wholeness if it live at all,  
And all its strength is knit with constancy.

## GRAF.

He used to say himself he was too sane  
To give his life away for excellence  
Which yet must stand, an ivory statuette •  
Wrought to perfection through long lonely years,  
Huddled in the mart of mediocrities.  
He said, the very finest doing wins  
The admiring only ; but to leave undone,  
Promise and not fulfil, like buried youth,  
Wins all the envious, makes them sigh your name  
As that fair Absent, blameless Possible,  
Which could alone impassion them ; and thus,  
Serene negation has free gift of all,  
Panting achievement struggles, is denied,

Or wins to lose again. What say you, Armgart?  
Truth has rough flavours if we bite it through;  
I think this sarcasm came from out its core  
Of bitter irony.

## ARMGART.

It is the truth

Mean souls select to feed upon. What then?  
Their meanness is a truth, which I will spurn.  
The praise I seek lives not in envious breath  
Using my name to blight another's deed.  
I sing for love of song and that renown  
Which is the spreading act, the world-wide share,  
Of good that I was born with. Had I failed—  
Well, that had been a truth most pitiable  
I cannot bear to think what life would be  
With high hope shrunk to endurance, stunted aims  
Like broken lances ground to eating-knives,  
A self sunk down to look with level eyes  
At low achievement, doomed from day to day  
To distaste of its consciousness. But I——

GRAF.

Have won, not lost, in your decisive throw.  
 And I too glory in this issue ; yet,  
 The public verdict has no potency  
 To sway my judgment of what Armgart is :  
 My pure delight in her would be but sullied,  
 If it o'erflowed with mixture of men's praise.  
 And had she failed, I should have said, " The pearl  
 Remains a pearl for me, reflects the light  
 With the same fitness that first charmed my gaze—  
 Is worth as fine a setting now as then."

ARMGART (*rising*).

Oh, you are good ! But why will you rehearse  
 The talk of cynics, who with insect eyes  
 Explore the secrets of the rubbish-heap ?  
 I hate your epigrams and pointed saws  
 Whose narrow truth is but broad falsity.  
 Confess your friend was shallow.

GRAF.

I confess

Life is not rounded in an epigram,  
And saying aught, we leave a world unsaid.  
I quoted, merely to shape forth my thought  
That high success has terrors when achieved—  
Like preternatural spouses whose dire love  
Hangs perilous on slight observances :  
Whence it were possible that Armgart crowned  
Might turn and listen to a pleading voice,  
Though Armgart striving in the race was deaf.  
You said you dared not think what life had been  
Without the stamp of eminence ; have you thought  
How you will bear the poise of eminence  
With dread of sliding ? Paint the future out  
As an unchecked and glorious career,  
'Twill grow more strenuous by the very love  
You bear to excellence, the very fate  
Of human powers, which tread at every step  
On possible verges.

ARMGART.

I accept the peril.

I choose to walk high with sublimer dread

Rather than crawl in safety. And, besides,  
I am an artist as you are a noble :  
I ought to bear the burthen of my rank.

GRAF.

Such parallels, dear Armgart, are but snares  
To catch the mind with seeming argument—  
Small baits of likeness 'mid disparity.  
Men rise the higher as their task is high,  
The task being well achieved. A woman's rank  
Lies in the fulness of her womanhood :  
Therein alone she is royal.

ARMGART.

Yes, I know  
The oft-taught Gospel : " Woman, thy desire  
Shall be that all superlatives on earth  
Belong to men, save the one highest kind—  
To be a mother. Thou shalt not desire  
To do aught best save pure subservience :  
Nature has willed it so ! " O blessed Nature !  
Let her be arbitress ; she gave me voice

Such as she only gives a woman child,  
 Best of its kind, gave me ambition too,  
 That sense transcendent which can taste the joy  
 Of swaying multitudes, of being adored  
 For such achievement, needed excellence,  
 As man's best art must wait for, or be dumb.  
 Men did not say, when I had sung last night,  
 "'Twas good, nay, wonderful, considering  
 She is a woman"—and then turn to add,  
 "Tenor or baritone had sung her songs  
 Better, of course: she's but a woman spoiled."  
 I beg your pardon, Graf, you said it.

GRAF.

No!

How should I say it, Armgart? I who own  
 The magic of your nature-given art  
 As sweetest effluence of your womanhood  
 Which, being to my choice the best, must find  
 The best of utterance. But this I say:  
 Your fervid youth beguiles you; you mistake  
 A strain of lyric passion for a life

Which in the spending is a chronicle  
With ugly pages. Trust me, Armgart, trust me ;  
Ambition exquisite as yours which soars  
Toward something quintessential you call fame,  
Is not robust enough for this gross world  
Whose fame is dense with false and foolish breath.  
Ardour, a-twin with nice refining thought,  
Prepares a double pain. Pain had been saved,  
Nay, purer glory reached, had you been throned  
As woman only, holding all your art  
As attribute to that dear sovereignty—  
Concentering your power in home delights  
Which penetrate and purify the world.

## ARMGART.

What ! leave the opera with my part ill-sung  
While I was warbling in a drawing-room ?  
Sing in the chimney-corner to inspire  
My husband reading news ? Let the world hear  
My music only in his morning speech  
Less stammering than most honourable men's ?  
No ! tell me that my song is poor, my art

The piteous feat of weakness aping strength—  
 That were fit proem to your argument.  
 Till then, I am an artist by my birth—  
 By the same warrant that I am a woman :  
 Nay, in the added rarer gift I see  
 Supreme vocation : if a conflict comes,  
 Perish—no, not the woman, but the joys  
 Which men make narrow by their narrowness.  
 Oh, I am happy ! The great masters write  
 For women's voices, and great Music wants me !  
 I need not crush myself within a mould  
 Of theory called Nature : I have room  
 To breathe and grow unstunted.

GRAF.

Armgart, hear me.
 I meant not that our talk should hurry on  
 To such collision. Foresight of the ills  
 Thick shadowing your path, drew on my speech  
 Beyond intention. True, I came to ask  
 A great renunciation, but not this  
 Towards which my words at first perversely strayed,

As if in memory of their earlier suit,  
 Forgetful . . . . .  
 Armgart, do you remember too? the suit  
 Had but postponement, was not quite disdained—  
 Was told to wait and learn—what it has learned—  
 A more submissive speech.

ARMGART (*with some agitation*).

Then it forgot  
 Its lesson cruelly. As I remember,  
 'Twas not to speak save to the artist crowned,  
 Nor speak to her of casting off her crown. •

•  
 GRAF.

Nor will it, Armgart. I come not to seek  
 Any renunciation save the wife's,  
 Which turns away from other possible love  
 Future and worthier, to take his love  
 Who asks the name of husband. He who sought  
 Armgart obscure, and heard her answer, "Wait"—  
 May come without suspicion now to seek  
 Armgart applauded.

ARMGART (*turning towards him*).

Yes, without suspicion  
Of aught save what consists with faithfulness  
In all expressed intent. Forgive me, Graf—  
I am ungrateful to no soul that loves me—  
To you most grateful. Yet the best intent  
Grasps but a living present which may grow  
Like any unfledged bird. You are a noble,  
And have a high career; just now you said  
'Twas higher far than aught a woman seeks  
Beyond mere womanhood. You claim to be  
More than a husband, but could not rejoice  
That I were more than wife. What follows, then?  
You choosing me with such persistency  
As is but stretched-out rashness, soon must find  
Our marriage asks concessions, asks resolve  
To share renunciation or demand it.  
Either we both renounce a mutual ease,  
As in a nation's need both man and wife  
Do public services, or one of us  
Must yield that something else for which each lives

Besides the other. Men are reasoners :  
That premiss of superior claims perforce  
Urges conclusion—"Armgart, it is you."

GRAF.

But if I say I have considered this  
With strict prevision, counted all the cost  
Which that great good of loving you demands—  
Questioned my stores of patience, half resolved  
To live resigned without a bliss whose threat  
Touched you as well as me—and finally,  
With impetus of undivided will  
Returned to say, "You shall be free as now ;  
Only accept the refuge, shelter, guard,  
My love will give your freedom"—then your words  
Are hard accusal.

ARMGART.

Well, I accuse myself.  
My love would be accomplice of your will.

GRAF.

Again—my will?

ARMGART.

Oh, your unspoken will.

Your silent tolerance would torture me,  
And on that rack I should deny the good  
I yet believed in.

GRAF.

Then I am the man  
Whom you would love?

ARMGART.

Whom I refuse to love!

No; I will live alone and pour my pain  
With passion into music, where it turns  
To what is best within my better self.  
I will not take for husband one who deems  
The thing my soul acknowledges as good—  
The thing I hold worth striving, suffering for,

To be a thing dispensed with easily,  
Or else the idol of a mind infirm.

GRAF.

Armgar, you are ungenerous ; you strain  
My thought beyond its mark. Our difference  
Lies not so deep as love—as union  
Through a mysterious fitness that transcends  
Formal agreement.

ARMGART.

It lies deep enough  
To chafe the union. If many a man  
Refrains, degraded, from the utmost right,  
Because the pleadings of his wife's small fears  
Are little serpents biting at his heel,—  
How shall a woman keep her steadfastness  
Beneath a frost within her husband's eyes  
Where coldness scorches ? Graf, it is your sorrow  
That you love Armgar. Nay, it is her sorrow  
That she may not love you.

GRAF.

Woman, it seems,

Has enviable power to love or not

According to her will.

ARMGART.

She has the will—

I have—who am one woman—not to take

Disloyal pledges that divide her will.

The man who marries me must wed my Art—

Honour and cherish it, not tolerate.

GRAF.

The man is yet to come whose theory

Will weigh as nought with you against his love.

ARMGART.

Whose theory will plead beside his love.

GRAF.

Himself a singer, then? who knows no life

Out of the opera books, where tenor parts  
Are found to suit him?

ARMGART.

You are bitter, Graf.

Forgive me ; seek the woman you deserve,  
All grace, all goodness, who has not yet found  
A meaning in her life, nor any end  
Beyond fulfilling yours. The type abounds.

GRAF.

And happily, for the world.

ARMGART.

Yes, happily.

Let it excuse me that my kind is rare :  
Commonness is its own security.

GRAF.

Armgar, I would with all my soul I knew  
The man so rare that he could make your life  
As woman sweet to you, as artist safe.

ARMGART.

Oh, I can live unmated, but not live  
Without the bliss of singing to the world,  
And feeling all my world respond to me.

GRAF.

May it be lasting. Then, we two must part?

ARMGART.

I thank you from my heart for all. Farewell!

-

## SCENE III.

A YEAR LATER.

*The same Salon. WALPURGA is standing looking towards the window with an air of uneasiness.*

DOCTOR GRAHN.

DOCTOR.

Where is my patient, Fräulein?

WALPURGA.

Fled ! escaped !

Gone to rehearsal. Is it dangerous ?

DOCTOR.

No, no ; her throat is cured. I only came  
To hear her try her voice. Had she yet sung?

WALPURGA.

No ; she had meant to wait for you. She said,  
“The Doctor has a right to my first song.”  
Her gratitude was full of little plans,  
But all were swept away like gathered flowers  
By sudden storm. She saw this opera bill—  
It was a wasp to sting her : she turned pale,  
Snatched up her hat and mufflers, said in haste,  
“I go to Leo—to rehearsal—none  
Shall sing Fidelio to-night but me !”  
Then rushed down-stairs.

DOCTOR (*looking at his watch*).

And this, not long ago?

WALPURGA.

Barely an hour.

DOCTOR.

I will come again,

Returning from Charlottenburg at one.

WALPURGA.

Doctor, I feel a strange presentiment.

Are you quite easy?

DOCTOR.

She can take no harm.

'Twas time for her to sing: her throat is well.

It was a fierce attack, and dangerous;

I had to use strong remedies, but—well!

At one, dear Fräulein, we shall meet again,

## SCENE IV.

TWO HOURS LATER.

WALPURGA *starts up, looking towards the door.* ARM-  
GART *enters, followed by LEO.* *She throws herself on*  
*a chair which stands with its back towards the door,*  
*speechless, not seeming to see anything.* WALPURGA  
*casts a questioning terrified look at LEO.* *He shrugs*  
*his shoulders, and lifts up his hands behind ARMGART,*  
*who sits like a helpless image, while WALPURGA takes*  
*off her hat and mantle.*

WALPURGA.

Armgar, dear Armgar (*kneeling and taking her*  
*hands*), only speak to me,

Your poor Walpurga. Oh, your hands are cold.  
Clasp mine, and warm them ! I will kiss them  
warm.

(ARMGART looks at her an instant, then draws away  
her hands, and, turning aside, buries her face  
against the back of the chair, WALPURGA rising  
and standing near.)

(DOCTOR GRAHN enters.)

DOCTOR.

News ! stirring news to-day ! wonders come thick.

ARMGART (*starting up at the first sound of his voice,  
and speaking vehemently*).

Yes, thick, thick, thick ! and you have murdered it !  
Murdered my voice—poisoned the soul in me,  
And kept me living.

You never told me that your cruel cures  
Were clogging films—a mouldy, dead'ning blight—  
A lava-mud to crust and bury me,  
Yet hold me living in a deep, deep tomb,

Crying unheard for ever ! Oh, your cures  
Are devil's triumphs : you can rob, maim, slay,  
And keep a hell on the other side your cure  
Where you can see your victim quivering  
Between the teeth of torture—see a soul  
Made keen by loss—all anguish with a good  
Once known and gone ! (*Turns and sinks back on her  
chair.*)

O misery, misery !  
You might have killed me, might have let me sleep  
After my happy day and wake—not here !  
In some new unremembered world,—not here,  
Where all is faded, flat—a feast broke off—  
Banners all meaningless—exulting words  
Dull, dull—a drum that lingers in the air  
Beating to melody which no man hears.

DOCTOR (*after a moment's silence*).

A sudden check has shaken you, poor child !  
All things seem livid, tottering to your sense,  
From inward tumult. Stricken by a threat  
You see your terrors only. Tell me, Leo :

'Tis not such utter loss.

(LEO, *with a shrug, goes quietly out.*)

The freshest bloom  
Merely, has left the fruit; the fruit itself . . .

ARMGART.

Is ruined, withered, is a thing to hide  
Away from scorn or pity. Oh, you stand  
And look compassionate now, but when Death came  
With mercy in his hands, you hindered him.  
I did not choose to live and have your pity.  
You never told me, never gave me choice  
To die a singer, lightning-struck, unmaimed,  
Or live what you would make me with your cures—  
A self accursed with consciousness of change,  
A mind that lives in nought but members lopped,  
A power turned to pain—as meaningless  
As letters fallen asunder that once made  
A hymn of rapture. Oh, I had meaning once,  
Like day and sweetest air. What am I now?  
The millionth woman in superfluous herds.  
Why should I be, do, think? 'Tis thistle-seed,

That grows and grows to feed the rubbish-heap.

Leave me alone !

DOCTOR.

Well, I will come again ;

Send for me when you will, though but to rate me.

That is medicinal—a letting blood.

ARMGART.

Oh, there is one physician, only one,

Who cures and never spoils. Him I shall send for ;

He comes readily.

DOCTOR (*to* W<sup>ALP</sup>URGA).

One word, dear Fräulein.

## SCENE V.

ARMGART, WALPURGA.

ARMGART.

Walpurga, have you walked this morning? •

•

WALPURGA.

No.

ARMGART.

Go, then, and walk; I wish to be alone.

WALPURGA.

I will not leave you.

ARMGART.

Will not, at my wish?

WALPURGA.

Will not, because you wish it. Say no more,  
But take this draught.

ARMGART.

The Doctor gave it you?

It is an anodyne. Put it away.

He cured me of my voice, and now he wants  
To cure me of my vision and resolve—  
Drug me to sleep that I may wake again  
Without a purpose, abject as the rest  
To bear the yoke of life. He shall not cheat me  
Of that fresh strength which anguish gives the soul,  
The inspiration of revolt, ere rage  
Slackens to faltering. Now I see the truth.

WALPURGA (*setting down the glass*).

Then you must see a future in your reach,

With happiness enough to make a dower  
For two of modest claims.

ARMGART.

Oh, you intone  
That chant of consolation wherewith ease  
Makes itself easier in the sight of pain.

WALPURGA.

No ; I would not console you, but rebuke.

ARMGART.

That is more bearable. Forgive me, dear.  
Say what you will. But now I want to write.

*(She rises and moves towards a table.)*

WALPURGA.

I say then, you are simply fevered, mad ;  
You cry aloud at horrors that would vanish  
If you would change the light, throw into shade  
The loss you aggrandise, and let day fall  
On good remaining, nay on good refused

Which may be gain now. Did you not reject  
A woman's lot more brilliant, as some held,  
Than any singer's? It may still be yours.  
Graf Dornberg loved you well.

ARMGART.

Not me, not me.

He loved one well who was like me in all  
Save in a voice which made that All unlike  
As diamond is to charcoal. Oh, a man's love!  
Think you he loves a woman's inner self  
Aching with loss of loveliness?—as mothers  
Cleave to the palpitating pain that dwells  
Within their misformed offspring?

WALPURGA.

But the Graf

Chose you as simple Armgart—had preferred  
That you should never seek for any fame  
But such as matrons have who rear great sons.  
And therefore you rejected him; but now—

ARMGART.

Ay, now—now he would see me as I am,

*(She takes up a hand-mirror.)*

Russet and songless as a missel-thrush.

An ordinary girl—a plain brown girl,

Who, if some meaning flash from out her words,

Shocks as a disproportioned thing—a Will

That, like an arm astretch and broken off,

Has nought to hurl—the torso of a soul.

I sang him into love of me : my song

Was consecration, lifted me apart

From the crowd chiselled like me, sister forms,

But empty of divineness. Nay, my charm

Was half that I could win fame yet renounce !

A wife with glory possible absorbed

Into her husband's actual.

WALPURGA.

For shame !

Armgar, you slander him. What would you say

If now he came to you and asked again

That you would be his wife ?

ARMGART.

No, and thrice no !

It would be pitying constancy, not love,  
That brought him to me now. I will not be  
A pensioner in marriage. Sacraments  
Are not to feed the paupers of the world.  
If he were generous—I am generous too.

WALPURGA.

Proud, Armgart, but not generous.

ARMGART.

Say no more.

He will not know until—

WALPURGA.

He knows already.

ARMGART (*quickly*).

Is he come back ?

WALPURGA.

Yes, and will soon be here.

The Doctor had twice seen him and would go  
From hence again to see him.

ARMGART.

Well, he knows.

It is all one.

WALPURGA.

What if he were outside?

I hear a footstep in the ante-room.

ARMGART (*raising herself and assuming calmness.*)

Why let him come, of course. I shall behave  
Like what I am, a common personage  
Who looks for nothing but civility.  
I shall not play the fallen heroine,  
Assume a tragic part and throw out cues  
For a beseeching lover.

WALPURGA.

Some one raps.

*(Goes to the door.)*

A letter—from the Graf.

ARMGART.

Then open it.

*(WALPURGA still offers it.)*

Nay, my head swims. Read it. I cannot see.

*(WALPURGA opens it, reads and pauses.)*

Read it. Have done! No matter what it is.

¶

WALPURGA *(reads in a low, hesitating voice)*.

“I am deeply moved—my heart is rent, to hear of your illness and its cruel result, just now communicated to me by Dr Grahn. But surely it is possible that this result may not be permanent. For youth such as yours, Time may hold in store something more than resignation: who shall say that it does not hold renewal? I have not dared to ask admis-

sion to you in the hours of a recent shock, but I cannot depart on a long mission without tendering my sympathy and my farewell. I start this evening for the Caucasus, and thence I proceed to India, where I am intrusted by the Government with business which may be of long duration."

(WALPURGA *sits down dejectedly.*)

ARMGART (*after a slight shudder, bitterly*).

The Graf has much discretion. I am glad.

He spares us both a pain, not seeing me.

What I like least is that consoling hope—.

That empty cup, so neatly ciphered "Time,"

Handed me as a cordial for despair.

(*Slowly and dreamily*) Time—what a word to fling as  
charity!

Bland neutral word for slow, dull-beating pain—

Days, months, and years!—If I would wait for  
them

(*She takes up her hat and puts it on, then wraps  
her mantle round her. WALPURGA leaves  
the room.*)

Why, this is but beginning. (WALP. *re-enters.*) Kiss  
me, dear.

I am going now—alone—out—for a walk.

Say you will never wound me any more

With such cajolery as nurses use

To patients amorous of a crippled life.

Flatter the blind : I see.

WALPURGA.

Well, I was wrong.

In haste to soothe, I snatched at flickers merely.

Believe me, I will flatter you no more.

ARMGART.

Bear witness, I am calm. I read my lot

As soberly as if it were a tale

Writ by a creeping feuilletonist and called

“The Woman’s Lot: a Tale of Everyday:”

A middling woman’s, to impress the world

With high superfluosness ; her thoughts a crop

Of chick-weed errors or of pot-herb facts,  
 Smiled at like some child's drawing on a slate.  
 "Genteel?" "O yes, gives lessons ; not so good  
 As any man's would be, but cheaper far."  
 "Pretty?" "No ; yet she makes a figure fit  
 For good society. Poor thing, she sews  
 Both late and early, turns and alters all  
 To suit the changing mode. Some widower  
 Might do well, marrying her ; but in these days ! . . .  
 Well, she can somewhat eke her narrow gains  
 By writing, just to furnish her with gloves  
 And droschkies in the rain. They print her  
     things  
 Often for charity."—Oh, a dog's life !  
 A harnessed dog's, that draws a little cart  
 Voted a nuisance ! I am going now.

WALPURGA.

Not now, the door is locked.

ARMGART.

Give me the key !

WALPURGA.

Locked on the outside. Gretchen has the key :  
She is gone on errands.

ARMGART.

What, you dare to keep me  
Your prisoner ?

WALPURGA.

And have I not been yours ?  
Your wish has been a bolt to keep me in.  
Perhaps that middling woman, whom you paint  
With far-off scorn . . . . .

ARMGART.

I paint what I must be !  
What is my soul to me without the voice  
That gave it freedom ?—gave it one grand touch  
And made it nobly human ?—Prisoned now,  
Prisoned in all the petty mimicries  
Called woman's knowledge, that will fit the world

As doll-clothes fit a man. I can do nought  
 Better than what a million women do—  
 Must drudge among the crowd and feel my life  
 Beating upon the world without response,  
 Beating with passion through an insect's horn  
 That moves a millet-seed laboriously.  
 If I *would* do it !

WALPURGA (*coldly*).

And why should you not?

ARMGART (*turning quickly*). •

Because Heaven made me royal — wrought me  
 •  
 out

With subtle finish towards pre-eminence,  
 Made every channel of my soul converge  
 To one high function, and then flung me down,  
 That breaking I might turn to subtlest pain.  
 An inborn passion gives a rebel's right :  
 I would rebel and die in twenty worlds  
 Sooner than bear the yoke of thwarted life,  
 Each keenest sense turned into keen distaste,

Hunger not satisfied but kept alive  
Breathing in languor half a century.  
All the world now is but a rack of threads  
To twist and dwarf me into pettiness  
And basely feigned content, the placid mask  
Of women's misery.

WALPURGA (*indignantly*).

Ay, such a mask  
As the few born like you to easy joy,  
Cradled in privilege, take for natural  
On all the lowly faces that must look  
Upward to you! What revelation now  
Shows you the mask or gives presentiment  
Of sadness hidden? You who every day  
These five years saw me limp to wait on you,  
And thought the order perfect which gave *me*,  
The girl without pretension to be aught,  
A splendid cousin for my happiness :  
To watch the night through when her brain was  
fired

With too much gladness—listen, always listen  
To what *she* felt, who having power had right  
To feel exorbitantly, and submerge  
The souls around her with the poured-out flood  
Of what must be ere she were satisfied !  
That was feigned patience, was it? Why not love,  
Love nurtured even with that strength of self  
Which found no room save in another's life ?  
Oh, such as I know joy by negatives,  
And all their deepest passion is a pang  
Till they accept their pauper's heritage,  
And meekly live from out the general store.  
Of joy they were born, stripped of. I accept—  
Nay, now would sooner choose it than the wealth  
Of natures you call royal, who can live  
In mere mock knowledge of their fellows' woe,  
Thinking their smiles may heal it.

ARMGART (*tremulously*).

Nay, Walpurga,

I did not make a palace of my joy  
To shut the world's truth from me. All my good

Was that I touched the world and made a part  
In the world's dower of beauty, strength, and bliss ;  
It was the glimpse of consciousness divine  
Which pours out day and sees the day is good.  
Now I am fallen dark ; I sit in gloom,  
Remembering bitterly. Yet you speak truth ;  
I wearied you, it seems ; took all your help  
As cushioned nobles use a weary serf,  
Not looking at his face.

## WALPURGA.

Oh, I but stand  
As a small symbol for the mighty sum  
Of claims unpaid to needy myriads ;  
I think you never set your loss beside  
That mighty deficit. Is your work gone—  
The prouder queenly work that paid itself  
And yet was overpaid with men's applause ?  
Are you no longer chartered, privileged,  
But sunk to simple woman's penury,  
To ruthless Nature's chary average—  
Where is the rebel's right for you alone ?

Noble rebellion lifts a common load ;  
 But what is he who flings his own load off  
 And leaves his fellows toiling? Rebel's right?  
 Say rather, the deserter's. Oh, you smiled  
 From your clear height on all the million lots  
 Which yet you brand as abject.

## ARMGART.

I was blind

With too much happiness : true vision comes  
 Only, it seems, with sorrow. Were there one  
 This moment near me, suffering what I feel,  
 And needing me for comfort in her pang—  
 Then it were worth the while to live ; not else.

## WALPURGA.

One—near you—why, they throng ! you hardly stir  
 But your act touches them. We touch afar.  
 For did not swarthy slaves of yesterday  
 Leap in their bondage at the Hebrews' flight,  
 Which touched them through the thrice millennial  
 dark ?

But you can find the sufferer you need  
With touch less subtle.

ARMGART.

Who has need of me?

WALPURGA.

Love finds the need it fills. But you are hard.

ARMGART.

Is it not you, Walpurga, who are hard?  
You humoured all my wishes till to-day,  
When fate has blighted me.

WALPURGA.

You would not hear  
The "chant of consolation:" words of hope  
Only embittered you. Then hear the truth—  
A lame girl's truth, whom no one ever praised  
For being cheerful, "It is well," they said:  
"Were she cross-grained she could not be endured."

A word of truth from her had startled you ;  
But you—you claimed the universe ; nought less  
Than all existence working in sure tracks  
Towards your supremacy. The wheels might scathe  
A myriad destinies—nay, must perforce ;  
But yours they must keep clear of ; just for you  
The seething atoms through the firmament  
Must bear a human heart—which you had not !  
For what is it to you that women, men,  
Plod, faint, are weary, and espouse despair  
Of aught but fellowship ? Save that you spurn  
To be among them ? Now, then, you are lame—  
Maimed, as you said, and levelled with the crowd :  
Call it new birth—birth from that monstrous Self  
Which, smiling down upon a race oppressed,  
Says, “ All is good, for I am throned at ease.”  
Dear Armgart—nay, you tremble—I am cruel.

ARMGART.

O no ! hark ! Some one knocks. Come in !—come in !

(*Enter LEO.*)

LEO.

See, Gretchen let me in. I could not rest  
Longer away from you.

ARMGART.

Sit down, dear Leo.  
Walpurga, I would speak with him alone.  
(WALPURGA *goes out.*)

LEO (*hesitatingly.*)

You mean to walk?

ARMGART.

No, I shall stay within.  
(*She takes off her hat and mantle, and sits down  
immediately. After a pause, speaking in a  
subdued tone to LEO.*)  
How old are you?

LEO.

Threescore and five.

ARMGART.

That's old.

I never thought till now how you have lived.

They hardly ever play your music?

LEO (*raising his eyebrows and throwing out his lip*).

No!

Schubert too wrote for silence: half his work

Lay like a frozen Rhine till summers came

That warmed the grass above him. Even so!

His music lives now with a mighty youth.\*

•

ARMGART.

Do you think yours will live when you are dead?

LEO.

Pfui! The time was, I drank that home-brewed  
wine

And found it heady, while my blood was young:

Now it scarce warms me. Tipple it as I may,

I am sober still, and say : “ My old friend Leo,  
Much grain is wasted in the world and rots ;  
Why not thy handful ? ”

ARMGART.

Strange ! since I have known you  
Till now I never wondered how you lived.  
When I sang well—that was your jubilee.  
But you were old already.

LEO.

Yes, child, yes :  
Youth thinks itself the goal of each old life ;  
Age has but travelled from a far-off time  
Just to be ready for youth’s service. Well !  
It was my chief delight to perfect you.

ARMGART.

Good Leo ! You have lived on little joys.  
But your delight in me is crushed for ever.  
Your pains, where are they now ? They shaped intent

Which action frustrates ; shaped an inward sense  
Which is but keen despair, the agony  
Of highest vision in the lowest pit.

LEO.

Nay, nay, I have a thought : keep to the stage,  
To drama without song ; for you can act—  
Who knows how well, when all the soul is poured  
Into that sluice alone ?

ARMGART.

I know, and you :

The second or third best in tragedies  
That cease to touch the fibre of the time.  
No ; song is gone, but nature's other gift,  
Self-judgment, is not gone. Song was my speech,  
And with its impulse only, action came :  
Song was the battle's onset, when cool purpose  
Glowing into rage, becomes a warring god  
And moves the limbs with miracle. But now—  
Oh, I should stand hemmed in with thoughts and  
rules—

Say "This way passion acts," yet never feel  
The might of passion. How should I declaim?  
As monsters write with feet instead of hands.  
I will not feed on doing great tasks ill,  
Dull the world's sense with mediocrity,  
And live by trash that smothers excellence.  
One gift I had that ranked me with the best—  
The secret of my frame—and that is gone.  
For all life now I am a broken thing.  
But silence there! Good Leo, advise me now.  
I would take humble work and do it well—  
Teach music, singing—what I can—not here,  
But in some smaller town where I may bring  
The method you have taught me, pass your gift  
To others who can use it for delight.  
You think I can do that?

*(She pauses with a sob in her voice.)*

LEO.

Yes, yes, dear child!

And it were well, perhaps, to change the place—

Begin afresh as I did when I left  
Vienna with a heart half broken.

ARMGART (*roused by surprise*).

You?

LEO.

Well, it is long ago. But I had lost—  
No matter! We must bury our dead joys  
And live above them with a living world.  
But whither, think you, you would like to go?

ARMGART.

To Freiburg.

LEO.

In the Breisgau? And why there?  
It is too small.

ARMGART.

Walpurga was born there,  
And loves the place. She quitted it for me

These five years past. Now I will take her there.

Dear Leo, I will bury my dead joy.

LEO.

Mothers do so, bereaved; then learn to love

Another's living child.

ARMGART.

Oh, it is hard

To take the little corpse, and lay it low,

And say, "None misses it but me."

She sings . . .

I mean Paulina sings *Fidelio*,

And they will welcome her to-night.

LEO.

Well, well,

'Tis better that our griefs should not spread far.

HOW LISA LOVED THE KING

## HOW LISA LOVED THE KING

---

Six hundred years ago, in Dante's time,  
Before his cheek was furrowed by deep rhyme—  
When Europe, fed afresh from Eastern story,  
Was like a garden tangled with the glory  
Of flowers hand-planted and of flowers air-sown,  
Climbing and trailing, budding and full-blown,  
Where purple bells are tossed amid pink stars,  
And springing blades, green troops in innocent wars,  
Crowd every shady spot of teeming earth,  
Making invisible motion visible birth—  
Six hundred years ago, Palermo town  
Kept holiday. A deed of great renown,

A high revenge, had freed it from the yoke  
Of hated Frenchmen, and from Calpe's rock  
To where the Bosphorus caught the earlier sun,  
'Twas told that Pedro, King of Aragon,  
Was welcomed master of all Sicily,  
A royal knight, supreme as kings should be  
In strength and gentleness that make high chivalry.

Spain was the favourite home of knightly grace,  
Where generous men rode steeds of generous  
race ;

Both Spanish, yet half Arab, both inspired  
By mutual spirit, that each motion fired  
With beauteous response, like minstrelsy  
Afresh fulfilling fresh expectancy.  
So when Palermo made high festival,  
The joy of matrons and of maidens all  
Was the mock terror of the tournament,  
Where safety, with the glimpse of danger blent,  
Took exaltation as from epic song,  
Which greatly tells the pains that to great 'life  
belong.

And in all eyes King Pedro was the king  
Of cavaliers : as in a full-gemmed ring  
The largest ruby, or as that bright star  
Whose shining shows us where the Hyads are.  
His the best jennet, and he sat it best ;  
His weapon, whether tilting or in rest,  
Was worthiest watching, and his face once seen  
Gave to the promise of his royal mien  
Such rich fulfilment as the opened eyes  
Of a loved sleeper, or the long-watched rise  
Of vernal day, whose joy o'er stream and meadow flies

But of the maiden forms that thick enwreathed  
The broad piazza and sweet witchery breathed,  
With innocent faces budding all arow  
From balconies and windows high and low,  
Who was it felt the deep mysterious glow,  
The impregnation with supernal fire  
Of young ideal love—transformed desire,  
Whose passion is but worship of that Best  
Taught by the many-mingled creed of each young  
breast?

'Twas gentle Lisa, of no noble line,  
Child of Bernardo, a rich Florentine,  
Who from his merchant-city hither came  
To trade in drugs ; yet kept an honest fame,  
And had the virtue not to try and sell  
Drugs that had none. He loved his riches well,  
But loved them chiefly for his Lisa's sake,  
Whom with a father's care he sought to make  
The bride of some true honourable man :—  
Of Perdicone (so the rumour ran),  
Whose birth was higher than his fortunes were ;  
For still your trader likes a mixture fair  
Of blood that hurries to some higher strain  
Than reckoning money's loss and money's gain.  
And of such mixture good may surely come :  
Lords' scions so may learn to cast a sum,  
A trader's grandson bear a well-set head,  
And have less conscious manners, better bred ;  
Nor, when he tries to be polite, be rude instead.

'Twas Perdicone's friends made overtures  
To good Bernardo ; so one dame assures

Her neighbour dame who notices the youth  
Fixing his eyes on Lisa ; and in truth  
Eyes that could see her on this summer day  
Might find it hard to turn another way.  
She had a pensive beauty, yet not sad ;  
Rather, like minor cadences that glad  
The hearts of little birds amid spring boughs ;  
And oft the trumpet or the joust would rouse  
Pulses that gave her cheek a finer glow,  
Parting her lips that seemed a mimic bow  
By chiselling Love for play in coral wrought,  
Then quickened by him with the passionate  
thought,

•

The soul that trembled in the lustrous night  
Of slow long eyes. Her body was so slight,  
It seemed she could have floated in the sky,  
And with the angelic choir made symphony ;  
But in her cheek's rich tinge, and in the dark  
Of darkest hair and eyes, she bore a mark  
Of kinship to her generous mother earth,  
The fervid land that gives the plummy palm-trees  
birth.

She saw not Perdicone ; her young mind  
Dreamed not that any man had ever pined  
For such a little simple maid as she :  
She had but dreamed how heavenly it would be  
To love some hero noble, beauteous, great,  
Who would live stories worthy to narrate,  
Like Roland, or the warriors of Troy,  
The Cid, or Amadis, or that fair boy  
Who conquered everything beneath the sun,  
And somehow, some time, died at Babylon  
Fighting the Moors. For heroes all were good  
And fair as that archangel who withstood  
The Evil One, the author of all wrong—  
That Evil One who made the French so strong;  
And now the flower of heroes must be he  
Who drove those tyrants from dear Sicily,  
So that her maids might walk to vespers tranquilly.

Young Lisa saw this hero in the king,  
And as wood-lilies that sweet odours bring  
Might dream the light that opes their modest eyne  
Was lily-odoured,—and as rites divine,

Round turf-laid altars, or 'neath roofs of stone,  
Draw sanctity from out the heart alone  
That loves and worships, so the miniature  
Perplexed of her soul's world, all virgin pure,  
Filled with heroic virtues that bright form,  
Raona's royalty, the finished norm  
Of horsemanship—the half of chivalry:  
For how could generous men avengers be,  
Save as God's messengers on coursers fleet?—  
These, scouring earth, made Spain with Syria meet  
In one self world where the same right had sway,  
And good must grow as grew the blessed day.  
No more ; great Love his essence had endued  
With Pedro's form, and entering subdued  
The soul of Lisa, fervid and intense,  
Proud in its choice of proud obedience  
To hardship glorified by perfect reverence.

Sweet Lisa homeward carried that dire guest,  
And in her chamber through the hours of rest  
The darkness was alight for her with sheen  
Of arms, and plumèd helm, and bright between

Their commoner gloss, like the pure living spring  
'Twixt porphyry lips, or living bird's bright wing  
'Twixt golden wires, the glances of the king  
Flashed on her soul, and waked vibrations there  
Of known delights love-mixed to new and rare :  
The impalpable dream was turned to breathing flesh,  
Chill thought of summer to the warm close mesh  
Of sunbeams held between the citron-leaves,  
Clothing her life of life. Oh, she believes  
That she could be content if he but knew  
(Her poor small self could claim no other due)  
How Lisa's lowly love had highest reach  
Of wingèd passion, whereto wingèd speech  
Would be scorched remnants left by mounting flame.  
Though, had she such lame message, were it blame  
To tell what greatness dwelt in her, what rank  
She held in loving? Modest maidens shrank  
From telling love that fed on selfish hope ;  
But love, as hopeless as the shattering song  
Wailed for loved beings who have joined the throng  
Of mighty dead ones. . . . Nay, but she was weak—  
Knew only prayers and ballads—could not speak

With eloquence save what dumb creatures have,  
That with small cries and touches small boons  
crave.

She watched all day that she might see him pass  
With knights and ladies ; but she said, " Alas !  
Though he should see me, it were all as one  
He saw a pigeon sitting on the stone  
Of wall or balcony : some coloured spot  
His eye just sees, his mind regardeth not.  
I have no music-touch that could bring nigh  
My love to his soul's hearing. I shall die,  
And he will never know who Lisa was—  
The trader's child, whose soaring spirit rose  
As hedge-born aloe-flowers that rarest years dis-  
close.

" For were I now a fair deep-breasted queen  
A-horseback, with blonde hair, and tunic green  
Gold-bordered, like Costanza, I should need  
No change within to make me queenly there ;  
For they the royal-hearted women are

Who nobly love the noblest, yet have grace  
For needy suffering lives in lowliest place,  
Carrying a choicer sunlight in their smile,  
The heavenliest ray that pitieth the vile.  
My love is such, it cannot choose but soar  
Up to the highest ; yet for evermore,  
Though I were happy, throned beside the king,  
I should be tender to each little thing  
With hurt warm breast, that had no speech to tell  
Its inward pang, and I would soothe it well  
With tender touch and with a low soft moan  
For company : my dumb love-pang is lone,  
Prisoned as topaz-beam within a rough-garbed stone."

So, inward-wailing, Lisa passed her days.  
Each night the August moon with changing phase  
Looked broader, harder on her unchanged pain ;  
Each noon the heat lay heavier again  
On her despair ; until her body frail  
Shrank like the snow that watchers in the vale  
See narrowed on the height each summer morn ;  
While her dark glance burnt larger, more forlorn,

As if the soul within her all on fire  
Made of her being one swift funeral pyre.  
Father and mother saw with sad dismay  
The meaning of their riches melt away:  
For without Lisa what would sequins buy?  
What wish were left if Lisa were to die?  
Through her they cared for summers still to come,  
Else they would be as ghosts without a home  
In any flesh that could feel glad desire.  
They pay the best physicians, never tire  
Of seeking what will soothe her, promising  
That aught she longed for, though it were a  
thing •

Hard to be come at as the Indian snow,  
Or roses that on alpine summits blow—  
It should be hers. She answers with low voice,  
She longs for death alone—death is her choice ;  
Death is the King who never did think scorn,  
But rescues every meanest soul to sorrow born.

Yet one day, as they bent above her bed  
And watched her in brief sleep, her drooping head

Turned gently, as the thirsty flowers that feel  
Some moist revival through their petals steal,  
And little flutterings of her lids and lips  
Told of such dreamy joy as sometimes dips  
A skyey shadow in the mind's poor pool.  
She oped her eyes, and turned their dark gems full  
Upon her father, as in utterance dumb  
Of some new prayer that in her sleep had come.  
“What is it, Lisa?” “Father, I would see  
Minuccio, the great singer; bring him me.”  
For always, night and day, her unstilled thought,  
Wandering all o'er its little world, had sought  
How she could reach, by some soft pleading touch,  
King Pedro's soul, that she who loved so much  
Dying, might have a place within his mind—  
A little grave which he would sometimes find  
And plant some flower on it—some thought, some  
memory kind.

Till in her dream she saw Minuccio  
Touching his viola, and chanting low  
A strain that, falling on her brokenly,  
Seemed blossoms lightly blown from off a tree,

Each burthened with a word that was a scent—  
Raona, Lisa, love, death, tournament ;  
Then in her dream she said, “ He sings of me—  
Might be my messenger ; ah, now I see  
The king is listening——” Then she awoke,  
And, missing her dear dream, that new-born longing  
spoke.

She longed for music : that was natural ;  
Physicians said it was medicinal ;  
The humours might be schooled by true consent  
Of a fine tenor and fine instrument ;  
In brief, good music, mixed with doctor's stuff,  
Apollo with Asklepios—enough !  
Minuccio, entreated, gladly came.  
(He was a singer of most gentle fame—  
A noble, kindly spirit, not elate  
That he was famous, but that song was great—  
Would sing as finely to this suffering child  
As at the court where princes on him smiled.)  
Gently he entered and sat down by her,  
Asking what sort of strain she would prefer—

The voice alone, or voice with viol wed ;  
Then, when she chose the last, he preluded  
With magic hand, that summoned from the strings  
Aerial spirits, rare yet vibrant wings  
That fanned the pulses of his listener,  
And waked each sleeping sense with blissful stir.  
Her cheek already showed a slow faint blush,  
But soon the voice, in pure full liquid rush,  
Made all the passion, that till now she felt,  
Seem but cool waters that in warmer melt.  
Finished the song, she prayed to be alone  
With kind Minuccio ; for her faith had grown  
To trust him as if missioned like a priest  
With some high grace, that when his singing  
    ceased  
Still made him wiser, more magnanimous  
Than common men who had no genius.

So laying her small hand within his palm,  
She told him how that secret glorious harm  
Of loftiest loving had befallen her ;  
That death, her only hope, most bitter were,

If when she died her love must perish too  
As songs unsung and thoughts unspoken do,  
Which else might live within another breast.  
She said, "Minuccio, the grave were rest,  
If I were sure, that lying cold and lone,  
My love, my best of life, had safely flown  
And nestled in the bosom of the king ;  
See, 'tis a small weak bird, with unfledged wing.  
But you will carry it for me secretly,  
And bear it to the king, then come to me  
And tell me it is safe, and I shall go  
Content, knowing that he I love my love doth know."



Then she wept silently, but each large tear  
Made pleading music to the inward ear  
Of good Minuccio. "Lisa, trust in me,"  
He said, and kissed her fingers loyally ;  
"It is sweet law to me to do your will,  
And ere the sun his round shall thrice fulfil,  
I hope to bring you news of such rare skill  
As amulets have, that aches in trusting bosoms  
still."

He needed not to pause and first devise  
How he should tell the king ; for in nowise  
Were such love-message worthily bested  
Save in fine verse by music renderèd.  
He sought a poet-friend, a Siennese,  
And “ Mico, mine,” he said, “ full oft to please  
Thy whim of sadness I have sung thee strains  
To make thee weep in verse : now pay my pains,  
And write me a canzòn divinely sad,  
Sinlessly passionate and meekly mad  
With young despair, speaking a maiden’s heart  
Of fifteen summers, who would fain depart  
From ripening life’s new-urgent mystery—  
Love-choice of one too high her love to be—  
But cannot yield her breath till she has poured  
Her strength away in this hot-bleeding word  
Telling the secret of her soul to her soul’s lord.”

Said Mico, “ Nay, that thought is poesy,  
I need but listen as it sings to me.  
Come thou again to-morrow.” The third day,  
When linkèd notes had perfected the lay,

Minuccio had his summons to the court  
To make, as he was wont, the moments short  
Of ceremonious dinner to the king.  
This was the time when he had meant to bring  
Melodious message of young Lisa's love :  
He waited till the air had ceased to move  
To ringing silver, till Falernian wine  
Made quickened sense with quietude combine,  
And then with passionate descant made each ear  
incline.

*Love, thou didst see me, light as morning's breath,  
Roaming a garden in a joyous error,  
Laughing at chases vain, a happy child,  
Till of thy countenance the alluring terror  
In majesty from out the blossoms smiled,  
From out their life seeming a beauteous Death.*

*O Love, who so didst choose me for thine own,  
Taking this little isle to thy great sway,  
See now, it is the honour of thy throne  
That what thou gavest perish not away,*

*Nor leave some sweet remembrance to atone  
By life that will be for the brief life gone :  
Hear, ere the shroud o'er these frail limbs be thrown—  
Since every king is vassal unto thee,  
My heart's lord needs must listen loyally—  
O tell him I am waiting for my Death !*

*Tell him, for that he hath such royal power  
'Twere hard for him to think how small a thing,  
How slight a sign, would make a wealthy dower  
For one like me, the bride of that pale king  
Whose bed is mine at some swift-nearing hour.  
Go to my lord, and to his memgry bring  
That happy birthday of my sorrowing  
When his large glance made meaner gazers glad,  
Entering the bannered lists : 'twas then I had  
The wound that laid me in the arms of Death.*

*Tell him, O Love, I am a lowly maid,  
No more than any little knot of thyme  
That he with careless foot may often tread ;  
Yet lowest fragrance oft will mount sublime*

*And cleave to things most high and hallowèd,  
As doth the fragrance of my life's springtime,  
My lowly love, that soaring seeks to climb  
Within his thought, and make a gentle bliss,  
More blissful than if mine, in being his :  
So shall I live in him and rest in Death.*

The strain was new. It seemed a pleading cry,  
And yet a rounded perfect melody,  
Making grief beauteous as the tear-filled eyes  
Of little child at little miseries.  
Trembling at first, then swelling as it rose,  
Like rising light that broad and broader grows,  
It filled the hall, and so possessed the air  
That not one breathing soul was present there,  
Though dullest, slowest, but was quivering  
In music's grasp, and forced to hear her sing.  
But most such sweet compulsion took the mood  
Of Pedro (tired of doing what he would).  
Whether the words which that strange meaning  
bore  
Were but the poet's feigning or aught more,

Was bounden question, since their aim must be  
At some imagined or true royalty.  
He called Minuccio and bade him tell  
What poet of the day had writ so well ;  
For though they came behind all former rhymes,  
The verses were not bad for these poor times.  
“ Monsignor, they are only three days old,”  
Minnuccio said ; “ but it must not be told  
How this song grew, save to your royal ear.”  
Eager, the king withdrew where none was near,  
And gave close audience to Minuccio,  
Who meetly told that love-tale meet to know.  
The king had features pliant to confess  
The presence of a manly tenderness—  
Son, father, brother, lover, blent in one,  
In fine harmonic exaltation—  
The spirit of religious chivalry.  
He listened, and Minuccio could see  
The tender, generous admiration spread  
O'er all his face, and glorify his head  
With royalty that would have kept its rank  
Though his brocaded robes to tatters shrank.

He answered without pause, "So sweet a maid,  
In nature's own insignia arrayed,  
Though she were come of unmixed trading blood  
That sold and bartered ever since the Flood,  
Would have the self-contained and single worth  
Of radiant jewels born in darksome earth.  
Raona were a shame to Sicily,  
Letting such love and tears unhonoured be :  
Hasten, Minuccio, tell her that the king  
To-day will surely visit her when vespers ring."

Joyful, Minuccio bore the joyous word, •  
And told at full, while none but Lisa heard,  
How each thing had befallen, sang the song,  
And like a patient nurse who would prolong  
All means of soothing, dwelt upon each tone,  
Each look, with which the mighty Aragon  
Marked the high worth his royal heart assigned  
To that dear place he held in Lisa's mind.  
She listened till the draughts of pure content  
Through all her limbs like some new being  
went—

Life, not recovered, but untried before,  
From out the growing world's unmeasured store  
Of fuller, better, more divinely mixed.  
'Twas glad reverse : she had so firmly fixed  
To die, already seemed to fall a veil  
Shrouding the inner glow from light of senses  
pale.

Her parents wondering see her half arise—  
Wondering, rejoicing, see her long dark eyes  
Brimful with clearness, not of 'scaping tears,  
But of some light ethereal that enspheres  
Their orbs with calm, some vision newly learnt  
Where strangest fires erewhile had blindly burnt.  
She asked to have her soft white robe and band  
And coral ornaments, and with her hand  
She gave her locks' dark length a backward fall,  
Then looked intently in a mirror small,  
And feared her face might perhaps displease the  
king ;  
“In truth,” she said, “I am a tiny thing ;  
I was too bold to tell what could such visit bring.”

Meanwhile the king, revolving in his thought  
That virgin passion, was more deeply wrought  
To chivalrous pity; and at vesper bell,  
With careless mien which hid his purpose well,  
Went forth on horseback, and as if by chance  
Passing Bernardo's house, he paused to glance  
At the fine garden of this wealthy man,  
This Tuscan trader turned Palermitan :  
But, presently dismounting, chose to walk  
Amid the trellises, in gracious talk  
With this same trader, deigning even to ask  
If he had yet fulfilled the father's task .  
Of marrying that daughter whose young charms  
Himself, betwixt the passages of arms,  
Noted admiringly. " Monsignor, no,  
She is not married ; that were little woe,  
Since she has counted barely fifteen years ;  
But all such hopes of late have turned to fears ;  
She droops and fades ; though for a space quite  
brief—  
Scarce three hours past—she finds some strange  
relief."

The king avised: "'Twere dole to all of us,  
The world should lose a maid so beauteous;  
Let me now see her; since I am her liege lord,  
Her spirits must wage war with death at my strong  
word."

In such half-serious playfulness, he wends,  
With Lisa's father and two chosen friends,  
Up to the chamber where she pillowed sits  
Watching the open door, that now admits  
A presence as much better than her dreams,  
As happiness than any longing seems.  
The king advanced, and, with a reverent kiss  
Upon her hand, said, "Lady, what is this?  
You, whose sweet youth should others' solace be,  
Pierce all our hearts, languishing piteously.  
We pray you, for the love of us, be cheered,  
Nor be too reckless of that life, endeared  
To us who know your passing worthiness,  
And count your blooming life as part of our life's  
bliss."

Those words, that touch upon her hand from him  
Whom her soul worshipped, as far seraphim

Worship the distant glory, brought some shame  
Quivering upon her cheek, yet thrilled her frame  
With such deep joy she seemed in paradise,  
In wondering gladness, and in dumb surprise  
That bliss could be so blissful : then she spoke—  
“Signor, I was too weak to bear the yoke,  
The golden yoke of thoughts too great for me ;  
That was the ground of my infirmity.  
But now, I pray your grace to have belief  
That I shall soon be well, nor any more cause grief.”

The king alone perceived the covert sense  
Of all her words, which made one evidence  
With her pure voice and candid loveliness,  
That he had lost much honour, honouring less  
That message of her passionate distress.  
He stayed beside her for a little while  
With gentle looks and speech, until a smile  
As placid as a ray of early morn  
On opening flower-cups o'er her lips was borne.  
When he had left her, and the tidings spread  
Through all the town how he had visited

The Tuscan trader's daughter, who was sick,  
Men said, it was a royal deed and catholic.

And Lisa? she no longer wished for death;  
But as a poet, who sweet verses saith  
Within his soul, and joys in music there,  
Nor seeks another heaven, nor can bear  
Disturbing pleasures, so was she content,  
Breathing the life of grateful sentiment.  
She thought no maid betrothed could be more blest;  
For treasure must be valued by the test  
Of highest excellence and rarity,  
And her dear joy was best as best could be;  
There seemed no other crown to her delight  
Now the high loved one saw her love aright.  
Thus her soul thriving on that exquisite mood,  
Spread like the May-time all its beauteous good  
O'er the soft bloom of neck, and arms, and cheek,  
And strengthened the sweet body, once so weak,  
Until she rose and walked, and, like a bird  
With sweetly rippling throat, she made her spring  
joys heard.

The king, when he the happy change had seen,  
Trusted the ear of Constance, his fair queen,  
With Lisa's innocent secret, and conferred  
How they should jointly, by their deed and word,  
Honour this maiden's love, which, like the prayer  
Of loyal hermits, never thought to share  
In what it gave. The queen had that chief grace  
Of womanhood, a heart that can embrace  
All goodness in another woman's form ;  
And that same day, ere the sun lay too warm  
On southern terraces, a messenger  
Informed Bernardo that the royal pair •  
Would straightway visit him and celebrate  
Their gladness at his daughter's happier state,  
Which they were fain to see. Soon came the king  
On horseback, with his barons, heralding  
The advent of the queen in courtly state ;  
And all, descending at the garden gate,  
Streamed with their feathers, velvet, and brocade,  
Through the pleached alleys, till they, pausing, made  
A lake of splendour 'mid the aloes grey—  
When, meekly facing all their proud array,

The white-robed Lisa with her parents stood,  
As some white dove before the gorgeous brood  
Of dapple-breasted birds born by the Colchian flood.

The king and queen, by gracious looks and speech,  
Encourage her, and thus their courtiers teach  
How this fair morning they may courtliest be  
By making Lisa pass it happily.

And soon the ladies and the barons all  
Draw her by turns, as at a festival  
Made for her sake, to easy, gay discourse,  
And compliment with looks and smiles enforce ;  
A joyous hum is heard the gardens round ;  
Soon there is Spanish dancing and the sound  
Of minstrel's song, and autumn fruits are pluckt ;  
Till mindfully the king and queen conduct  
Lisa apart to where a trellised shade  
Made pleasant resting. Then King Pedro said—  
“Excellent maiden, that rich gift of love  
Your heart hath made us, hath a worth above  
All royal treasures, nor is fitly met  
Save when the grateful memory of deep debt

Lies still behind the outward honours done :  
And as a sign that no oblivion  
Shall overflow that faithful memory,  
We while we live your cavalier will be,  
Nor will we ever arm ourselves for fight,  
Whether for struggle dire or brief delight  
Of warlike feigning, but we first will take  
The colours you ordain, and for your sake  
Charge the more bravely where your emblem is ;  
Nor will we ever claim an added bliss  
To our sweet thoughts of you save one sole kiss.  
But there still rests the outward honour meet  
To mark your worthiness, and we entreat  
That you will turn your ear to proffered vows  
Of one who loves you, and would be your spouse.  
We must not wrong yourself and Sicily  
By letting all your blooming years pass by  
Unmated : you will give the world its due  
From beauteous maiden and become a matron true."

Then Lisa, wrapt in virgin wonderment  
At her ambitious love's complete content,

Which left no further good for her to seek  
Than love's obedience, said with accent meek—  
“Monsignor, I know well that were it known  
To all the world how high my love had flown,  
There would be few who would not deem me mad,  
Or say my mind the falsest image had  
Of my condition and your lofty place.  
But heaven has seen that for no moment's space  
Have I forgotten you to be the king,  
Or me myself to be a lowly thing—  
A little lark, enamoured of the sky,  
That soared to sing, to break its breast, and die.  
But, as you better know than I, the heart  
In choosing chooseth not its own desert,  
But that great merit which attracteth it;  
'Tis law, I struggled, but I must submit,  
And having seen a worth all worth above,  
I loved you, love you, and shall always love.  
But that doth mean, my will is ever yours,  
Not only when your will my good insures,  
But if it wrought me what the world calls harm—  
Fire, wounds, would wear from your dear will a charm.

That you will be my knight is full content,  
And for that kiss—I pray, first for the queen’s  
consent.”

Her answer, given with such firm gentleness,  
Pleased the queen well, and made her hold no less  
Of Lisa’s merit than the king had held.

And so, all cloudy threats of grief dispelled,  
There was betrothal made that very morn  
’Twixt Perdicone, youthful, brave, well-born,  
And Lisa, whom he loved; she loving well  
The lot that from obedience befell.

The queen a rare betrothal ring on each  
Bestowed, and other gems, with gracious speech.  
And that no joy might lack, the king, who knew  
The youth was poor, gave him rich Ceffalù  
And Cataletta, large and fruitful lands—  
Adding much promise when he joined their hands.  
At last he said to Lisa, with an air  
Gallant yet noble: “Now we claim our share  
From your sweet love, a share which is not small:  
For in the sacrament one crumb is all.”

Then taking her small face his hands between,  
He kissed her on the brow with kiss serene,  
Fit seal to that pure vision her young soul had  
seen.

Sicilians witnessed that King Pedro kept  
His royal promise : Perdicone stept  
To many honours honourably won,  
Living with Lisa in true union.  
Throughout his life the king still took delight  
To call himself fair Lisa's faithful knight ;  
And never wore in field or tournament  
A scarf or emblem save by Lisa sent.

Such deeds made subjects loyal in that land :  
They joyed that one so worthy to command,  
So chivalrous and gentle, had become  
The king of Sicily, and filled the room  
Of Frenchmen, who abused the Church's trust,  
Till, in a righteous vengeance on their lust,  
Messina rose, with God, and with the dagger's  
thrust.

## L'ENVOI.

*Reader, this story pleased me long ago  
In the bright pages of Boccaccio,  
And where the author of a good we know,  
Let us not fail to pay the grateful thanks we owe.*

1869.

# A MINOR PROPHET

## A MINOR PROPHET.

---

I HAVE a friend, a vegetarian seer,  
By name Elias Baptist Butterworth,      •  
A harmless, bland, disinterested man,  
Whose ancestors in Cromwell's day believed  
The Second Advent certain in five years,  
But when King Charles the Second came instead,  
Revised their date and sought another world :  
I mean—not heaven but—America.  
A fervid stock, whose generous hope embraced  
The fortunes of mankind, not stopping short  
At rise of leather, or the fall of gold,  
Nor listening to the voices of the time

As housewives listen to a cackling hen,  
With wonder whether she has laid her egg  
On their own nest-egg. Still they did insist  
Somewhat too wearisomely on the joys  
Of their Millennium, when coats and hats  
Would all be of one pattern, books and songs  
All fit for Sundays, and the casual talk  
As good as sermons preached extempore.

And in Elias the ancestral zeal  
Breathes strong as ever, only modified  
By Transatlantic air and modern thought.  
You could not pass him in the street and fail  
To note his shoulders' long declivity,  
Beard to the waist, swan-neck, and large pale eyes;  
Or, when he lifts his hat, to mark his hair  
Brushed back to show his great capacity—  
A full grain's length at the angle of the brow  
Proving him witty, while the shallower men  
Only seem witty in their repartees.  
Not that he's vain, but that his doctrine needs  
The testimony of his frontal lobe.

On all points he adopts the latest views ;  
Takes for the key of universal Mind  
The “levitation” of stout gentlemen ;  
Believes the Rappings are not spirits’ work,  
But the Thought-atmosphere’s, a steam of brains  
In correlated force of raps, as proved  
By motion, heat, and science generally ;  
The spectrum, for example, which has shown  
The self-same metals in the sun as here ;  
So the Thought-atmosphere is everywhere :  
High truths that glimmered under other names  
To ancient sages, whence good scholarship  
Applied to Eleusinian mysteries—  
The Vedas—Tripitaka—Vendidad—  
Might furnish weaker proof for weaker minds  
That Thought was rapping in the hoary past,  
And might have edified the Greeks by raps  
At the greater Dionysia, if their ears  
Had not been filled with Sophoclean verse.  
And when all Earth is vegetarian—  
When, lacking butchers, quadrupeds die out,  
And less Thought-atmosphere is reabsorbed

By nerves of insects parasitical,  
Those higher truths, seized now by higher minds  
But not expressed (the insects hindering)  
Will either flash out into eloquence,  
Or better still, be comprehensible  
By rappings simply, without need of roots.

'Tis on this theme—the vegetarian world—  
That good Elias willingly expands :  
He loves to tell in mildly nasal tones  
And vowels stretched to suit the widest views,  
The future fortunes of our infant Earth—  
When it will be too full of human kind  
To have the room for wilder animals.  
Saith he, Sahara will be populous  
With families of gentlemen retired  
From commerce in more Central Africa,  
Who order coolness as we order coal,  
And have a lobe anterior strong enough  
To think away the sand-storms. Science thus  
Will leave no spot on this terraqueous globe  
Unfit to be inhabited by man,

The chief of animals : all meaner brutes  
Will have been smoked and elbowed out of life.  
No lions then shall lap Caffrarian pools,  
Or shake the Atlas with their midnight roar :  
Even the slow, slime-loving crocodile,  
The last of animals to take a hint,  
Will then retire for ever from a scene  
Where public feeling strongly sets against him.  
Fishes may lead carnivorous lives obscure,  
But must not dream of culinary rank  
Or being dished in good society.  
Imagination in that distant age,  
Aiming at fiction called historical,  
Will vainly try to reconstruct the times  
When it was men's preposterous delight  
To sit astride live horses, which consumed  
Materials for incalculable cakes ;  
When there were milkmaids who drew milk from  
cows  
With udders kept abnormal for that end  
Since the rude mythopœic period  
Of Aryan dairymen, who did not blush

To call their milkmaid and their daughter one—  
Helplessly gazing at the Milky Way,  
Nor dreaming of the astral cocoa-nuts  
Quite at the service of posterity.  
'Tis to be feared, though, that the duller boys,  
Much given to anachronisms and nuts,  
(Elias has confessed boys will be boys)  
May write a jockey for a centaur, think  
Europa's suitor was an Irish bull,  
Æsop a journalist who wrote up Fox,  
And Bruin a chief swindler upon 'Change.  
Boys will be boys, but dogs will all be moral,  
With longer alimentary canals  
Suited to diet vegetarian.  
The uglier breeds will fade from memory,  
Or, being palæontological,  
Live but as portraits in large learned books,  
Distasteful to the feelings of an age  
Nourished on purest beauty. Earth will hold  
No stupid brutes, no cheerful queernesses,  
No naïve cunning, grave absurdity.  
Wart-pigs with tender and parental grunts,

Wombats much flattened as to their contour,  
Perhaps from too much crushing in the ark,  
But taking meekly that fatality ;  
The serious cranes, unstung by ridicule ;  
Long-headed, short-legged, solemn-looking curs,  
(Wise, silent critics of a flippant age);  
The silly straddling foals, the weak-brained geese  
Hissing fallaciously at sound of wheels—  
All these rude products will have disappeared  
Along with every faulty human type.  
By dint of diet vegetarian  
All will be harmony of hue and line,  
Bodies and minds all perfect, limbs well-turned,  
And talk quite free from aught erroneous.

Thus far Elias in his seer's mantle :  
But at this climax in his prophecy  
My sinking spirits, fearing to be swamped,  
Urge me to speak. "High prospects these, my  
friend,  
Setting the weak carnivorous brain astretch ;  
We will resume the thread another day."

“To-morrow,” cries Elias, “at this hour?”

“No, not to-morrow—I shall have a cold—  
At least I feel some soreness—this endemic—  
Good-bye.”

No tears are sadder than the smile  
With which I quit Elias. Bitterly  
I feel that every change upon this earth  
Is bought with sacrifice. My yearnings fail  
To reach that high apocalyptic mount  
Which shows in bird's-eye view a perfect world,  
Or enter warmly into other joys  
Than those of faulty, struggling human kind.  
That strain upon my soul's too feeble wing  
Ends in ignoble floundering: I fall  
Into short-sighted pity for the men  
Who living in those perfect future times  
Will not know half the dear imperfect things  
That move my smiles and tears—will never know  
The fine old incongruities that raise  
My friendly laugh; the innocent conceits  
That like a needless eyeglass or black patch  
Give those who wear them harmless happiness;

The twists and cracks in our poor earthenware,  
That touch me to more conscious fellowship  
(I am not myself the finest Parian)  
With my coevals. So poor Colin Clout,  
To whom raw onion gives prospective zest,  
Consoling hours of dampest wintry work,  
Could hardly fancy any regal joys  
Quite unimpregnate with the onion's scent :  
Perhaps his highest hopes are not all clear  
Of waftings from that energetic bulb :  
'Tis well that onion is not heresy.  
Speaking in parable, I am Colin Clout.     •  
A clinging flavour penetrates my life—  
My onion is imperfectness : I cleave  
To nature's blunders, evanescent types  
Which sages banish from Utopia.  
“Not worship beauty?” say you. Patience, friend !  
I worship in the temple with the rest ;  
But by my hearth I keep a sacred nook  
For gnomes and dwarfs, duck-footed waddling elves  
Who stitched and hammered for the weary man  
In days of old. And in that piety

I clothe ungainly forms inherited  
From toiling generations, daily bent  
At desk, or plough, or loom, or in the mine,  
In pioneering labours for the world.  
Nay, I am apt when floundering confused  
From too rash flight, to grasp at paradox,  
And pity future men who will not know  
A keen experience with pity blent,  
The pathos exquisite of lovely minds  
Hid in harsh forms—not penetrating them  
Like fire divine within a common bush  
Which glows transfigured by the heavenly guest,  
So that men put their shoes off; but encaged  
Like a sweet child within some thick-walled cell,  
Who leaps and fails to hold the window-bars,  
But having shown a little dimpled hand  
Is visited thenceforth by tender hearts  
Whose eyes keep watch about the prison walls.  
A foolish, nay, a wicked paradox!  
For purest pity is the eye of love  
Melting at sight of sorrow; and to grieve  
Because it sees no sorrow, shows a love

Warped from its truer nature, turned to love  
Of merest habit, like the miser's greed.  
But I am Colin still : my prejudice  
Is for the flavour of my daily food.  
Not that I doubt the world is growing still  
As once it grew from Chaos and from Night ;  
Or have a soul too shrunken for the hope  
Which dawned in human breasts, a double morn,  
With earliest watchings of the rising light  
Chasing the darkness ; and through many an age  
Has raised the vision of a future time  
That stands an Angel with a face all mild  
Spearing the demon. I too rest in faith  
That man's perfection is the crowning flower,  
Toward which the urgent sap in life's great tree  
Is pressing,—seen in puny blossoms now,  
But in the world's great morrows to expand  
With broadest petal and with deepest glow.

Yet, see the patched and plodding citizen  
Waiting upon the pavement with the throng  
While some victorious world-hero makes

Triumphal entry, and the peal of shouts  
And flash of faces 'neath uplifted hats  
Run like a storm of joy along the streets !  
He says, "God bless him !" almost with a sob,  
As the great hero passes ; he is glad  
The world holds mighty men and mighty deeds ;  
The music stirs his pulses like strong wine,  
The moving splendour touches him with awe—  
'Tis glory shed around the common weal,  
And he will pay his tribute willingly,  
Though with the pennies earned by sordid toil.  
Perhaps the hero's deeds have helped to bring  
A time when every honest citizen  
Shall wear a coat unpatched. And yet he feels  
More easy fellowship with neighbours there  
Who look on too ; and he will soon relapse  
From noticing the banners and the steeds  
To think with pleasure there is just one bun  
Left in his pocket, that may serve to tempt  
The wide-eyed lad, whose weight is all too much  
For that young mother's arms : and then he falls  
To dreamy picturing of sunny days

When he himself was a small big-cheeked lad  
In some far village where no heroes came,  
And stood a listener 'twixt his father's legs  
In the warm fire-light, while the old folk talked.  
And shook their heads and looked upon the floor;  
And he was puzzled, thinking life was fine—  
The bread and cheese so nice all through the  
    year  
And Christmas sure to come. Oh that good time!  
He, could he choose, would have those days again  
And see the dear old-fashioned things once more.  
But soon the wheels and drums have all passed by  
And tramping feet are heard like sudden rain:  
The quiet startles our good citizen;  
He feels the child upon his arms, and knows  
He is with the people making holiday  
Because of hopes for better days to come.  
But Hope to him was like the brilliant west  
Telling of sunrise in a world unknown,  
And from that dazzling curtain of bright hues  
He turned to the familiar face of fields  
Lying all clear in the calm morning land.

Maybe 'tis wiser not to fix a lens  
Too scrutinising on the glorious times  
When Barbarossa shall arise and shake  
His mountain, good King Arthur come again,  
And all the heroes of such giant soul  
That, living once to cheer mankind with hope,  
They had to sleep until the time was ripe  
For greater deeds to match their greater thought.  
Yet no ! the earth yields nothing more Divine  
Than high prophetic vision—than the Seer  
Who fasting from man's meaner joy beholds  
The paths of beauteous order, and constructs  
A fairer type, to shame our low content.  
But prophecy is like potential sound  
Which turned to music seems a voice sublime  
From out the soul of light ; but turns to noise  
In scrannel pipes, and makes all ears averse.

The faith that life on earth is being shaped  
To glorious ends, that order, justice, love  
Mean man's completeness, mean effect as sure  
As roundness in the dew-drop—that great faith

Is but the rushing and expanding stream  
Of thought, of feeling, fed by all the past.  
Our finest hope is finest memory,  
As they who love in age think youth is blest  
Because it has a life to fill with love.  
Full souls are double mirrors, making still  
An endless vista of fair things before  
Repeating things behind : so faith is strong  
Only when we are strong, shrinks when we shrink.  
It comes when music stirs us, and the chords  
Moving on some grand climax shake our souls  
With influx new that makes new energies.  
It comes in swellings of the heart and tears  
That rise at noble and at gentle deeds—  
At labours of the master-artist's hand  
Which, trembling, touches to a finer end,  
Trembling before an image seen within.  
It comes in moments of heroic love,  
Unjealous joy in joy not made for us—  
In conscious triumph of the good within  
Making us worship goodness that rebukes.  
Even our failures are a prophecy,

Even our yearnings and our bitter tears  
After that fair and true we cannot grasp ;  
As patriots who seem to die in vain  
Make liberty more sacred by their pangs.

Presentiment of better things on earth  
Sweeps in with every force that stirs our souls  
To admiration, self-renouncing love,  
Or thoughts, like light, that bind the world in one :  
Sweeps like the sense of vastness, when at night  
We hear the roll and dash of waves that break  
Nearer and nearer with the rushing tide,  
Which rises to the level of the cliff  
Because the wide Atlantic rolls behind  
Throbbing respondent to the far-off orbs.

1865.

BROTHER AND SISTER

# BROTHER AND SISTER.

---

## I.

I CANNOT choose but think upon the time  
When our two lives grew like two buds that kiss  
At lightest thrill from the bee's swinging chime,  
Because the one so near the other is.

He was the elder and a little man  
Of forty inches, bound to show no dread,  
And I the girl that puppy-like now ran,  
Now lagged behind my brother's larger tread.

I held him wise, and when he talked to me  
Of snakes and birds, and which God loved the best,  
I thought his knowledge marked the boundary  
Where men grew blind, though angels knew the rest.

If he said "Hush!" I tried to hold my breath  
Wherever he said "Come!" I stepped in faith.

## II.

Long years have left their writing on my brow,  
But yet the freshness and the dew-fed beam  
Of those young mornings are about me now,  
When we two wandered toward the far-off stream

With rod and line. Our basket held a store  
Baked for us only, and I thought with joy  
That I should have my share, though he had more,  
Because he was the elder and a boy.

The firmaments of daisies since to me  
Have had those mornings in their opening eyes,  
The bunchèd cowslip's pale transparency  
Carries that sunshine of sweet memories,

And wild-rose branches take their finest scent  
From those blest hours of infantine content.

## III.

Our mother bade us keep the trodden ways,  
Stroked down my tippet, set my brother's frill,  
Then with the benediction of her gaze  
Clung to us lessening, and pursued us still

Across the homestead to the rookery elms,  
Whose tall old trunks had each a grassy mound,  
So rich for us, we counted them as realms  
With varied products : here were earth-nuts found,



And here the Lady-fingers in deep shade ;  
Here sloping toward the Moat the rushes grew,  
The large to split for pith, the small to braid ;  
While over all the dark rooks cawing flew,

And made a happy strange solemnity,  
A deep-toned chant from life unknown to me.

## IV.

Our meadow-path had memorable spots :  
One where it bridged a tiny rivulet,  
Deep hid by tangled blue Forget-me-nots ;  
And all along the waving grasses met

My little palm, or nodded to my cheek,  
When flowers with upturned faces gazing drew  
My wonder downward, seeming all to speak  
With eyes of souls that dumbly heard and knew.

Then came the copse, where wild things rushed  
unseen,  
And black-scathed grass betrayed the past abode  
Of mystic gypsies, who still lurked between  
Me and each hidden distance of the road.

A gypsy once had startled me at play,  
Blotting with her dark smile my sunny day.

## v.

Thus rambling we were schooled in deepest lore,  
And learned the meanings that give words a soul,  
The fear, the love, the primal passionate store,  
Whose shaping impulses make manhood whole.

Those hours were seed to all my after good ;  
My infant gladness, through eye, ear, and touch,  
Took easily as warmth a various food  
To nourish the sweet skill of loving much:

•

For who in age shall roam the earth and find  
Reasons for loving that will strike out love  
With sudden rod from the hard year-pressed mind ?  
Were reasons sown as thick as stars above,

'Tis love must see them, as the eye sees light :  
Day is but Number to the darkened sight.

## VI.

Our brown canal was endless to my thought;  
And on its banks I sat in dreamy peace,  
Unknowing how the good I loved was wrought,  
Untroubled by the fear that it would cease.

Slowly the barges floated into view  
Rounding a grassy hill to me sublime  
With some Unknown beyond it, whither flow  
The parting cuckoo toward a fresh spring time.

The wide-arched bridge, the scented elder-flowers,  
The wondrous watery rings that died too soon,  
The echoes of the quarry, the still hours  
With white robe sweeping-on the shadeless noon,

Were but my growing self, are part of me,  
My present Past, my root of piety.

## VII.

Those long days measured by my little feet  
Had chronicles which yield me many a text;  
Where irony still finds an image meet  
Of full-grown judgments in this world perplex.

One day my brother left me in high charge,  
To mind the rod, while he went seeking bait,  
And bade me, when I saw a nearing barge,  
Snatch out the line, lest he should come too late.

•

Proud of the task, I watched with all my might  
For one whole minute, till my eyes grew wide,  
Till sky and earth took on a strange new light  
And seemed a dream-world floating on some tide—

A fair pavilioned boat for me alone  
Bearing me onward through the vast unknown.

## VIII.

But sudden came the barge's pitch-black prow,  
Nearer and angrier came my brother's cry,  
And all my soul was quivering fear, when lo!  
Upon the imperilled line, suspended high,

A silver perch! My guilt that won the prey,  
Now turned to merit, had a guerdon rich  
Of hugs and praises, and made merry play,  
Until my triumph reached its highest pitch

When all at home were told the wondrous feat,  
And how the little sister had fished well.  
In secret, though my fortune tasted sweet,  
I wondered why this happiness befell.

“The little lass had luck,” the gardener said:  
And so I learned, luck was with glory wed.

## IX.

We had the self-same world enlarged for each  
By loving difference of girl and boy :  
The fruit that hung on high beyond my reach  
He plucked for me, and oft he must employ

A measuring glance to guide my tiny shoe  
Where lay firm stepping-stones, or call to mind  
“This thing I like my sister may not do,  
For she is little, and I must be kind.” •



Thus boyish Will the nobler mastery learned  
Where inward vision over impulse reigns,  
Widening its life with separate life discerned,  
A Like unlike, a Self that self restrains.

His years with others must the sweeter be  
For those brief days he spent in loving me.

## X.

His sorrow was my sorrow, and his joy  
Sent little leaps and laughs through all my frame ;  
My doll seemed lifeless and no girlish toy  
Had any reason when my brother came.

I knelt with him at marbles, marked his fling  
Cut the ringed stem and make the apple drop,  
Or watched him winding close the spiral string  
That looped the orbits of the humming top.

Grasped by such fellowship my vagrant thought  
Ceased with dream-fruit dream-wishes to fulfil ;  
My æry-picturing fantasy was taught  
Subjection to the harder, truer skill

That seeks with deeds to grave a thought-tracked  
line,  
And by “ What is,” “ What will be ” to define.

## XI.

School parted us ; we never found again  
That childish world where our two spirits mingled  
Like scents from varying roses that remain  
One sweetness, nor can evermore be singled.

Yet the twin habit of that early time  
Lingered for long about the heart and tongue :  
We had been natives of one happy clime,  
And its dear accent to our utterance clung.

•

•

Till the dire years whose awful name is Change  
Had grasped our souls still yearning in divorce,  
And pitiless shaped them in two forms that range  
Two elements which sever their life's course.

But were another childhood-world my share,  
I would be born a little sister there.

STRADIVARIUS

# STRADIVARIUS.

---

Your soul was lifted by the wings to-day  
Hearing the master of the violin :       •  
You praised him, praised the great Sebastian too  
Who made that fine Chaconne ; but did you think  
Of old Antonio Stradivari ?—him  
Who a good century and half ago  
Put his true work in that brown instrument  
And by the nice adjustment of its frame  
Gave it responsive life, continuous  
With the master's finger-tips and perfected  
Like them by delicate rectitude of use.  
Not Bach alone, helped by fine precedent

Of genius gone before, nor Joachim  
Who holds the strain afresh incorporate  
By inward hearing and notation strict  
Of nerve and muscle, made our joy to-day:  
Another soul was living in the air  
And swaying it to true deliverance  
Of high invention and responsive skill :—  
That plain white-aproned man who stood at  
work

Patient and accurate full fourscore years,  
Cherished his sight and touch by temperance,  
And since keen sense is love of perfectness  
Made perfect violins, the needed paths  
For inspiration and high mastery.

No simpler man than he : he never cried,  
“ Why was I born to this monotonous task  
Of making violins ? ” or flung them down  
To suit with hurling act a well-hurled curse  
At labour on such perishable stuff.  
Hence neighbours in Cremona held him dull,  
Called him a slave, a mill-horse, a machine,

Begged him to tell his motives or to lend  
A few gold pieces to a loftier mind.  
Yet he had pithy words full fed by fact ;  
For Fact, well-trusted, reasons and persuades,  
Is gnomic, cutting, or ironical,  
Draws tears, or is a tocsin to arouse—  
Can hold all figures of the orator  
In one plain sentence ; has her pauses too—  
Eloquent silence at the chasm abrupt  
Where knowledge ceases. Thus Antonio  
Made answers as Fact willed, and made them  
strong. •

•

Naldo, a painter of eclectic school,  
Taking his dicers, candlelight and grins  
From Caravaggio, and in holier groups  
Combining Flemish flesh with martyrdom—  
Knowing all tricks of style at thirty-one,  
And weary of them, while Antonio  
At sixty-nine wrought placidly his best  
Making the violin you heard to-day—  
Naldo would tease him oft to tell his aims.

“Perhaps thou hast some pleasant vice to feed—  
The love of louis d’ors in heaps of four,  
Each violin a heap—I’ve nought to blame;  
My vices waste such heaps. But then, why work  
With painful nicety? Since fame once earned  
By luck or merit—oftenest by luck—  
(Else why do I put Bonifazio’s name  
To work that ‘*pinxit Naldo*’ would not sell?)  
Is welcome index to the wealthy mob  
Where they should pay their gold, and where they pay  
There they find merit—take your tow for flax,  
And hold the flax unlabelled with your name,  
Too coarse for sufferance.”

Antonio then :

“I like the gold—well, yes—but not for meals.  
And as my stomach, so my eye and hand,  
And inward sense that works along with both,  
Have hunger that can never feed on coin.  
Who draws a line and satisfies his soul,  
Making it crooked where it should be straight?  
An idiot with an oyster-shell may draw  
His lines along the sand, all wavering,

Fixing no point or pathway to a point ;  
An idiot one remove may choose his line,  
Straggle and be content ; but God be praised,  
Antonio Stradivari has an eye  
That winces at false work and loves the true,  
With hand and arm that play upon the tool  
As willingly as any singing bird  
Sets him to sing his morning roundelay,  
Because he likes to sing and likes the song."

Then Naldo : "'Tis a petty kind of fame  
At best, that comes of making violins ;  
And saves no masses, either. Thou wilt go  
To purgatory none the less."

But he :

"'Twere purgatory here to make them ill ;  
And for my fame—when any master holds  
'Twixt chin and hand a violin of mine,  
He will be glad that Stradivari lived,  
Made violins, and made them of the best.  
The masters only know whose work is good :  
They will choose mine, and while God gives them skill

I give them instruments to play upon,  
God choosing me to help Him."

"What! were God  
At fault for violins, thou absent?"

"Yes;  
He were at fault for Stradivari's work."

"Why, many hold Giuseppe's violins  
As good as thine."

"May be: they are different.  
His quality declines: he spoils his hand  
With over-drinking. But were his the best,  
He could not work for two. My work is mine,  
And, heresy or not, if my hand slack'd  
I should rob God—since He is fullest good—  
Leaving a blank instead of violins.  
I say, not God Himself can make man's best  
Without best men to help Him. I am one best  
Here in Cremona, using sunlight well  
To fashion finest maple till it serves  
More cunningly than throats, for harmony.  
'Tis rare delight: I would not change my skill

To be the Emperor with bungling hands,  
And lose my work, which comes as natural  
As self at waking."

        "Thou art little more  
Than a deft potter's wheel, Antonio ;  
Turning out work by mere necessity  
And lack of varied function. Higher arts  
Subsist on freedom—eccentricity—  
Uncounted inspirations—influence  
That comes with drinking, gambling, talk turned wild,  
Then moody misery and lack of food—  
With every dithyrambic fine excess :       •  
These make at last a storm which flashes out  
In lightning revelations. Steady work  
Turns genius to a loom ; the soul must lie  
Like grapes beneath the sun till ripeness comes  
And mellow vintage. I could paint you now  
The finest Crucifixion ; yesternight  
Returning home I saw it on a sky  
Blue-black, thick-starred. I want two louis d'ors  
To buy the canvas and the costly blues—  
Trust me a fortnight."

“Where are those last two  
I lent thee for thy Judith?—her thou saw’st  
In saffron gown, with Holofernes’ head  
And beauty all complete?”

“She is but sketched:  
I lack the proper model—and the mood.  
A great idea is an eagle’s egg,  
Craves time for hatching; while the eagle sits  
Feed her.”

“If thou wilt call thy pictures eggs  
I call the hatching, Work. ’Tis God gives skill,  
But not without men’s hands: He could not make  
Antonio Stradivari’s violins  
Without Antonio. Get thee to thy easel.”

# A COLLEGE BREAKFAST-PARTY

## A COLLEGE BREAKFAST-PARTY.

---

YOUNG Hamlet, not the hesitating Dane,  
But one named after him, who lately strove  
For honours at our English Wittenberg,—  
Blond, metaphysical, and sensuous,  
Questioning all things and yet half convinced  
Credulity were better; held inert  
'Twixt fascinations of all opposites,  
And half suspecting that the mightiest soul  
(Perhaps his own?) was union of extremes,  
Having no choice but choice of everything:  
As, drinking deep to-day for love of wine,  
To-morrow half a Brahmin, scorning life

As mere illusion, yearning for that True  
Which has no qualities; another day  
Finding the fount of grace in sacraments,  
And purest reflex of the light divine  
In gem-bossed pyx and broidered chasuble,  
Resolved to wear no stockings and to fast  
With arms extended, waiting ecstasy;  
But getting cramps instead, and needing change,  
A would-be pagan next:—

Young Hamlet sat

A guest with five of somewhat riper age  
At breakfast with Horatio, a friend  
With few opinions, but of faithful heart,  
Quick to detect the fibrous spreading roots  
Of character that feed men's theories,  
Yet cloaking weaknesses with charity  
And ready in all service save rebuke.

With ebb of breakfast and the cider-cup  
Came high debate: the others seated there  
Were Osric, spinner of fine sentences,  
A delicate insect creeping over life

Feeding on molecules of floral breath,  
And weaving gossamer to trap the sun;  
Laertes ardent, rash, and radical;  
Discursive Rosencranz, grave Guildenstern,  
And he for whom the social meal was made—  
The polished priest, a tolerant listener,  
Disposed to give a hearing to the lost,  
And breakfast with them ere they went below.

From alpine metaphysic glaciers first  
The talk sprang copious; the themes were old,  
But so is human breath, so infant eyes, •  
The daily nurslings of creative light.  
Small words held mighty meanings: Matter, Force,  
Self, Not-self, Being, Seeming, Space and Time—  
Plebeian toilers on the dusty road  
Of daily traffic, turned to Genii  
And cloudy giants darkening sun and moon.  
Creation was reversed in human talk:  
None said, "Let Darkness be," but Darkness was;  
And in it weltered with Teutonic ease,  
An argumentative Leviathan,

Blowing cascades from out his element,  
The thunderous Rosencranz, till

“Truce, I beg!”

Said Osric, with nice accent. “I abhor  
That battling of the ghosts, that strife of terms  
For utmost lack of colour, form, and breath,  
That tasteless squabbling called Philosophy:  
As if a blue-winged butterfly afloat  
For just three days above the Italian fields,  
Instead of sipping at the heart of flowers,  
Poising in sunshine, fluttering towards its bride,  
Should fast and speculate, considering  
What were if it were not? or what now is  
Instead of that which seems to be itself?  
Its deepest wisdom surely were to be  
A sipping, marrying, blue-winged butterfly;  
Since utmost speculation on itself  
Were but a three days’ living of worse sort—  
A bruising struggle all within the bounds  
Of butterfly existence.”

“I protest,”

Burst in Laertes, “against arguments

That start with calling me a butterfly,  
A bubble, spark, or other metaphor  
Which carries your conclusions as a phrase  
In quibbling law will carry property.  
Put a thin sucker for my human lips  
Fed at a mother's breast, who now needs food  
That I will earn for her ; put bubbles blown  
From frothy thinking, for the joy, the love,  
The wants, the pity, and the fellowship  
(The ocean deeps I might say, were I bent  
On bandying metaphors) that make a man—  
Why, rhetoric brings within your easy reach  
Conclusions worthy of—a butterfly.  
The universe, I hold, is no charade,  
No acted pun unriddled by a word,  
Nor pain a decimal diminishing  
With hocus-pocus of a dot or nought.  
For those who know it, pain is solely pain :  
Not any letters of the alphabet  
Wrought syllogistically pattern-wise,  
Nor any cluster of fine images,  
Nor any missing of their figured dance

By blundering molecules. Analysis  
May show you the right physic for the ill,  
Teaching the molecules to find their dance,  
But spare me your analogies, that hold  
Such insight as the figure of a crow  
And bar of music put to signify  
A crowbar."

Said the Priest, "There I agree—  
Would add that sacramental grace is grace  
Which to be known must first be felt, with all  
The strengthening influxes that come by prayer.  
I note this passingly—would not delay  
The conversation's tenor, save to hint  
That taking stand with Rosencranz one sees  
Final equivalence of all we name  
Our Good and Ill—their difference meanwhile  
Being inborn prejudice that plumps you down  
An Ego, brings a weight into your scale  
Forcing a standard. That resistless weight  
Obstinate, irremovable by thought,  
Persisting through disproof, an ache, a need  
That spaceless stays where sharp analysis

Has shown a plenum filled without it—what  
If this, to use your phrase, were just that Being  
Not looking solely, grasping from the dark,  
Weighing the difference you call Ego? This  
Gives you persistence, regulates the flux  
With strict relation rooted in the All.  
Who is he of your late philosophers  
Takes the true name of Being to be Will?  
I—nay, the Church objects nought, is content:  
Reason has reached its utmost negative,  
Physic and metaphysic meet in the inane  
And backward shrink to intense prejudice,  
Making their absolute and homogeneous  
A loaded relative, a choice to be  
Whatever is—supposed: a What is not.  
The Church demands no more, has standing room  
And basis for her doctrine: this (no more)—  
That the strong bias which we name the Soul,  
Though fed and clad by dissoluble waves,  
Has antecedent quality, and rules  
By veto or consent the strife of thought,  
Making arbitrament that we call faith.”

Here was brief silence, till young Hamlet spoke.

“I crave direction, Father, how to know

The sign of that imperative whose right

To sway my act in face of thronging doubts

Were an oracular gem in price beyond

Urim and Thummim lost to Israel.

That bias of the soul, that conquering die

Loaded with golden emphasis of Will—

How find it where resolve, once made, becomes

The rash exclusion of an opposite

Which draws the stronger as I turn aloof.”

•

“I think I hear a bias in your words,”

The Priest said mildly,—“that strong natural bent

Which we call hunger. What more positive

Than appetite?—of spirit or of flesh,

I care not—‘sense of need’ were truer phrase.

You hunger for authoritative right,

And yet discern no difference of tones,

No weight of rod that marks imperial rule?

Laertes granting, I will put your case

In analogic form : the doctors hold

Hunger which gives no relish—save caprice  
That tasting venison fancies mellow pears—  
A symptom of disorder, and prescribe  
Strict discipline. Were I physician here  
I would prescribe that exercise of soul  
Which lies in full obedience : you ask,  
Obedience to what? The answer lies  
Within the word itself ; for how obey  
What has no rule, asserts no absolute claim?  
Take inclination, taste—why, that is you,  
No rule above you. Science, reasoning  
On nature's order—they exist and move  
Solely by disputation, hold no pledge  
Of final consequence, but push the swing  
Where Epicurus and the Stoic sit  
In endless see-saw. One authority,  
And only one, says simply this, Obey:  
Place yourself in that current (test it so!)  
Of spiritual order where at least  
Lies promise of a high communion,  
A Head informing members, Life that breathes  
With gift of forces over and above

The *plus* of arithmetic interchange.

‘The Church too has a body,’ you object,

‘Can be dissected, put beneath the lens

And shown the merest continuity

Of all existence else beneath the sun.’

I grant you ; but the lens will not disprove

A presence which eludes it. Take your wit,

Your highest passion, widest-reaching thought :

Show their conditions if you will or can,

But though you saw the final atom-dance

Making each molecule that stands for sign

Of love being present, where is still your love ?

How measure that, how certify its weight ?

And so I say, the body of the Church

Carries a Presence, promises and gifts

Never disproved—whose argument is found

In lasting failure of the search elsewhere

For what it holds to satisfy man’s need.

But I grow lengthy: my excuse must be

Your question, Hamlet, which has probed right  
through

To the pith of our belief. And I have robbed

Myself of pleasure as a listener.

'Tis noon, I see ; and my appointment stands  
For half-past twelve with Voltimand. Good-bye."

Brief parting, brief regret—sincere, but quenched  
In fumes of best Havannah, which consoles  
For lack of other certitude. Then said,  
Mildly sarcastic, quiet Guildenstern :

"I marvel how the Father gave new charm  
To weak conclusions : I was half convinced  
The poorest reasoner made the finest man,  
And held his logic lovelier for its limp."



"I fain would hear," said Hamlet, "how you find  
A stronger footing than the Father gave.  
How base your self-resistance save on faith  
In some invisible Order, higher Right  
Than changing impulse. What does Reason bid ?  
To take a fullest rationality  
What offers best solution : so the Church.  
Science, detecting hydrogen aflame  
Outside our firmament, leaves mystery

Whole and untouched beyond ; nay, in our blood  
And in the potent atoms of each germ  
'The Secret lives—envelops, penetrates  
Whatever sense perceives or thought divines.  
Science, whose soul is explanation, halts  
With hostile front at mystery. The Church  
Takes mystery as her empire, brings its wealth  
Of possibility to fill the void  
'Twixt contradictions—warrants so a faith  
Defying sense and all its ruthless train  
Of arrogant 'Therefore.' Science with her lens  
Dissolves the Forms that made the other half  
Of all our love, which thenceforth widowed lives  
To gaze with maniac stare at what is not.  
The Church explains not, governs—feeds resolve  
By vision fraught with heart-experience  
And human yearning."

"Ay," said Guildenstern,  
With friendly nod, "the Father, I can see,  
Has caught you up in his air-chariot.  
His thought takes rainbow-bridges, out of reach  
By solid obstacles, evaporates

The coarse and common into subtilties,  
Insists that what is real in the Church  
Is something out of evidence, and begs  
(Just in parenthesis) you'll never mind  
What stares you in the face and bruises you.  
Why, by his method I could justify  
Each superstition and each tyranny  
That ever rode upon the back of man,  
Pretending fitness for his sole defence  
Against life's evil. How can aught subsist  
That holds no theory of gain or good?  
Despots with terror in their red right hand  
Must argue good to helpers and themselves,  
Must let submission hold a core of gain  
To make their slaves choose life. Their theory,  
Abstracting inconvenience of racks,  
Whip-lashes, dragonnades and all things coarse  
Inherent in the fact or concrete mass,  
Presents the pure idea—utmost good  
Secured by Order only to be found  
In strict subordination, hierarchy  
Of forces where, by nature's law, the strong

Has rightful empire, rule of weaker proved  
Mere dissolution. What can you object?  
The Inquisition—if you turn away  
From narrow notice how the scent of gold  
Has guided sense of damning heresy—  
The Inquisition is sublime, is love  
Hindering the spread of poison in men's souls:  
The flames are nothing: only smaller pain  
To hinder greater, or the pain of one  
To save the many, such as throbs at heart  
Of every system born into the world.  
So of the Church as high communion  
Of Head with members, fount of spirit force  
Beyond the calculus, and carrying proof  
In her sole power to satisfy man's need:  
That seems ideal truth as clear as lines  
That, necessary though invisible, trace  
The balance of the planets and the sun—  
Until I find a hitch in that last claim.  
'To satisfy man's need.' Sir, that depends:  
We settle first the measure of man's need  
Before we grant capacity to fill.

John, James, or Thomas, you may satisfy:  
But since you choose ideals I demand  
Your Church shall satisfy ideal man,  
His utmost reason and his utmost love.  
And say these rest a-hungered—find no scheme  
Content them both, but hold the world accursed,  
A Calvary where Reason mocks at Love,  
And Love forsaken sends out orphan cries  
Hopeless of answer; still the soul remains  
Larger, diviner than your half-way Church,  
Which racks your reason into false consent,  
And soothes your Love with sops of selfishness.”



“There I am with you,” cried Laertes. “What  
To me are any dictates, though they came  
With thunders from the Mount, if still within  
I see a higher Right, a higher Good  
Compelling love and worship? Though the earth  
Held force electric to discern and kill  
Each thinking rebel—what is martyrdom  
But death-defying utterance of belief,  
Which being mine remains my truth supreme

Though solitary as the throb of pain  
Lying outside the pulses of the world?  
Obedience is good: ay, but to what?  
And for what ends? For say that I rebel  
Against your rule as devilish, or as rule  
Of thunder-guiding powers that deny  
Man's highest benefit: rebellion then  
Were strict obedience to another rule  
Which bids me flout your thunder."

"Do you now!"

Said Osric, delicately, "how you come,  
Laertes mine, with all your warring zeal  
As Python-slayer of the present age—  
Cleansing all social swamps by darting rays  
Of dubious doctrine, hot with energy  
Of private judgment and disgust for doubt—  
To state my thesis, which you most abhor  
When sung in Daphnis-notes beneath the pines  
To gentle rush of waters. Your belief—  
In essence what is it but simply Taste?  
I urge with you exemption from all claims  
That come from other than my proper will,

An Ultimate within to balance yours,  
A solid meeting you, excluding you,  
Till you show fuller force by entering  
My spiritual space and crushing Me  
To a subordinate complement of You :  
Such ultimate must stand alike for all.  
Preach your crusade, then : all will join who like  
The hurly-burly of aggressive creeds ;  
Still your unpleasant Ought, your itch to choose  
What grates upon the sense, is simply Taste,  
Differs, I think, from mine (permit the word,  
Discussion forces it) in being bad." •

•  
The tone was too polite to breed offence,  
Showing a tolerance of what was "bad"  
Becoming courtiers. Louder Rosencranz  
Took up the ball with rougher movement, wont  
To show contempt for doting reasoners  
Who hugged some reasons with a preference,  
As warm Laertes did : he gave five puffs  
Intolerantly sceptical, then said,  
"Your human good, which you would make supreme,

How do you know it? Has it shown its face  
In adamantine type, with features clear,  
As this republic, or that monarchy?  
As federal grouping, or municipal?  
Equality, or finely shaded lines  
Of social difference? ecstatic whirl  
And draught intense of passionate joy and pain,  
Or sober self-control that starves its youth  
And lives to wonder what the world calls joy?  
Is it in sympathy that shares men's pangs  
Or in cool brains that can explain them well?  
Is it in labour or in laziness?  
In training for the tug of rivalry  
To be admired, or in the admiring soul?  
In risk or certitude? In battling rage  
And hardy challenges of Protean luck,  
Or in a sleek and rural apathy  
Full fed with sameness? Pray define your Good  
Beyond rejection by majority;  
Next, how it may subsist without the Ill  
Which seems its only outline. Show a world  
Of pleasure not resisted; or a world

Of pressure equalised, yet various  
In action formative ; for that will serve  
As illustration of your human good—  
Which at its perfecting (your goal of hope)  
Will not be straight extinct, or fall to sleep  
In the deep bosom of the Unchangeable.  
What will you work for, then, and call it good  
With full and certain vision—good for aught  
Save partial ends which happen to be yours?  
How will you get your stringency to bind  
Thought or desire in demonstrated tracks  
Which are but waves within a balanced whole?  
Is ‘relative’ the magic word that turns  
Your flux mercurial of good to gold?  
Why, that analysis at which you rage  
As anti-social force that sweeps you down  
The world in one cascade of molecules,  
Is brother ‘relative’—and grins at you  
Like any convict whom you thought to send  
Outside society, till this enlarged  
And meant New England and Australia too.  
The Absolute is your shadow, and the space

Which you say might be real were you milled  
To curves pellicular, the thinnest thin,  
Equation of no thickness, is still you."

"Abstracting all that makes him clubbable,"  
Horatio interposed. But Rosencranz,  
Deaf as the angry turkey-cock whose ears  
Are plugged by swollen tissues when he scolds  
At men's pretensions: "Pooh, your 'Relative'  
Shuts you in, hopeless, with your progeny  
As in a Hunger-tower; your social good,  
Like other deities by turn supreme,  
Is transient reflex of a prejudice,  
Anthology of causes and effects  
To suit the mood of fanatics who lead  
The mood of tribes or nations. I admit  
If you could show a sword, nay, chance of sword  
Hanging conspicuous to their inward eyes  
With edge so constant threatening as to sway  
All greed and lust by terror; and a law  
Clear-writ and proven as the law supreme  
Which that dread sword enforces—then your Right,

Duty, or social Good, were it once brought  
To common measure with the potent law,  
Would dip the scale, would put unchanging marks  
Of wisdom or of folly on each deed,  
And warrant exhortation. Until then,  
Where is your standard or criterion?  
'What always, everywhere, by all men'—why,  
That were but Custom, and your system needs  
Ideals never yet incorporate,  
The imminent doom of Custom. Can you find  
Appeal beyond the sentience in each man?  
Frighten the blind with scarecrows? raise an awe  
Of things unseen where appetite commands  
Chambers of imagery in the soul  
At all its avenues?—You chant your hymns  
To Evolution, on your altar lay  
A sacred egg called Progress: have you proved  
A Best unique where all is relative,  
And where each change is loss as well as gain?  
The age of healthy Saurians, well supplied  
With heat and prey, will balance well enough  
A human age where maladies are strong

And pleasures feeble ; wealth a monster gorged  
Mid hungry populations ; intellect  
Aproned in laboratories, bent on proof  
That *this* is *that* and both are good for nought  
Save feeding error through a weary life ;  
While Art and Poesy struggle like poor ghosts  
To hinder cock-crow and the dreadful light,  
Lurking in darkness and the charnel-house,  
Or like two stalwart greybeards, imbecile  
With limbs still active, playing at belief  
That hunt the slipper, foot-ball, hide-and-seek,  
Are sweetly merry, donning pinafores  
And lisping emulously in their speech.  
O human race ! Is this then all thy gain ?—  
Working at disproof, playing at belief,  
Debate on causes, distaste of effects,  
Power to transmute all elements, and lack  
Of any power to sway the fatal skill  
And make thy lot aught else than rigid doom ?  
The Saurians were better.—Guildenstern,  
Pass me the taper. Still the human curse  
Has mitigation in the best cigars.”

Then swift Laertes, not without a glare  
Of leonine wrath, "I thank thee for that word:  
That one confession, were I Socrates,  
Should force you onward till you ran your head  
At your own image—flatly gave the lie  
To all your blasphemy of that human good  
Which bred and nourished you to sit at ease  
And learnedly deny it. Say the world  
Groans ever with the pangs of doubtful births:  
Say, life's a poor donation at the best—  
Wisdom a yearning after nothingness—  
Nature's great vision and the thrill supreme  
Of thought-fed passion but a weary play—  
I argue not against you. Who can prove  
Wit to be witty when with deeper ground  
Dulness intuitive declares wit dull?  
If life is worthless to you—why, it is.  
*You* only know how little love you feel  
To give you fellowship, how little force  
Responsive to the quality of things.  
Then end your life, throw off the unsought yoke.  
If not—if you remain to taste cigars,

Choose racy diction, perorate at large  
 With tacit scorn of meaner men who win  
 No wreath or tripos—then admit at least  
 A possible Better in the seeds of earth;  
 Acknowledge debt to that laborious life  
 Which, sifting evermore the mingled seeds,  
 Testing the Possible with patient skill,  
 And daring ill in presence of a good  
 For futures to inherit, made your lot  
 One you would choose rather than end it, nay,  
 Rather than, say, some twenty million lots  
 Of fellow-Britons toiling all to make  
 That nation, that community, whereon  
 You feed and thrive and talk philosophy.  
 I am no optimist whose faith must hang  
 On hard pretence that pain is beautiful  
 And agony explained for men at ease  
 By virtue's exercise in pitying it.  
 But this I hold: that he who takes one gift  
 Made for him by the hopeful work of man,  
 Who tastes sweet bread, walks where he will un-  
 armed,

His shield and warrant the invisible law,  
Who owns a hearth and household charities,  
Who clothes his body and his sentient soul  
With skill and thoughts of men, and yet denies  
A human good worth toiling for, is cursed  
With worse negation than the poet feigned  
In Mephistopheles. The Devil spins  
His wire-drawn argument against all good  
With sense of brimstone as his private lot,  
And never drew a solace from the Earth."

Laertes fuming paused, and Guildenstern  
Took up with cooler skill the fusillade:  
"I meet your deadliest challenge, Rosencranz:—  
Where get, you say, a binding law, a rule  
Enforced by sanction, an Ideal throned  
With thunder in its hand? I answer, there  
Whence every faith and rule has drawn its force  
Since human consciousness awaking owned  
An Outward, whose unconquerable sway  
Resisted first and then subdued desire  
By pressure of the dire Impossible

Urging to possible ends the active soul  
And shaping so its terror and its love.  
Why, you have said it—threats and promises  
Depend on each man's sentience for their force:  
All sacred rules, imagined or revealed,  
Can have no form or potency apart  
From the percipient and emotive mind.  
God, duty, love, submission, fellowship,  
Must first be framed in man, as music is,  
Before they live outside him as a law.  
And still they grow and shape themselves anew,  
With fuller concentration in their life  
Of inward and of outward energies  
Blending to make the last result called Man,  
Which means, not this or that philosopher  
Looking through beauty into blankness, not  
The swindler who has sent his fruitful lie  
By the last telegram: it means the tide  
Of needs reciprocal, toil, trust, and love—  
The surging multitude of human claims  
Which make "a presence not to be put by"  
Above the horizon of the general soul.

Is inward Reason shrunk to subtleties, .  
And inward wisdom pining passion-starved?—  
The outward Reason has the world in store,  
Regenerates passion with the stress of want,  
Regenerates knowledge with discovery,  
Shows sly rapacious Self a blunderer,  
Widens dependence, knits the social whole  
In sensible relation more defined.  
Do Boards and dirty-handed millionaires  
Govern the planetary system?—sway  
The pressure of the Universe?—decide  
That man henceforth shall retrogress to ape,  
Emptied of every sympathetic thrill  
The All has wrought in him? dam up henceforth  
The flood of human claims as private force  
To turn their wheels and make a private hell  
For fish-pond to their mercantile domain?  
What are they but a parasitic growth  
On the vast real and ideal world  
Of man and nature blent in one divine?  
Why, take your closing dirge—say evil grows  
And good is dwindling ; science mere decay,

Mere dissolution of ideal wholes  
Which through the ages past alone have made  
The earth and firmament of human faith ;  
Say, the small arc of Being we call man  
Is near its mergence, what seems growing life  
Nought but a hurrying change towards lower types,  
The ready rankness of degeneracy.  
Well, they who mourn for the world's dying good  
May take their common sorrows for a rock,  
On it erect religion and a church,  
A worship, rites, and passionate piety—  
The worship of the Best though crucified  
And God-forsaken in its dying pangs ;  
The sacramental rites of fellowship  
In common woe ; visions that purify  
Through admiration and despairing love  
Which keep their spiritual life intact  
Beneath the murderous clutches of disproof  
And feed a martyr-strength."

"Religion high !"

(Rosencranz here) "but with communicants

Few as the cedars upon Lebanon—

A child might count them. What the world demands  
Is faith coercive of the multitude.”

“Tush, Guildenstern, you granted him too much,”

Burst in Laertes; “I will never grant

One inch of law to feeble blasphemies

Which hold no higher ratio to life—

Full vigorous human life that peopled earth

And wrought and fought and loved and bravely  
died—

Than the sick morning glooms of debauchees.

Old nations breed old children, wizened babes

Whose youth is languid and incredulous,

Weary of life without the will to die;

Their passions visionary appetites

Of bloodless spectres wailing that the world

For lack of substance slips from out their grasp;

Their thoughts the withered husks of all things  
dead,

Holding no force of germs instinct with life,

Which never hesitates but moves and grows.

Yet hear them boast in screams their godlike ill,  
Excess of knowing! Fie on you, Roseneranz!  
You lend your brains and fine-dividing tongue  
For bass-notes to this shrivelled crudity,  
This immature decrepitude that strains  
To fill our ears and claim the prize of strength  
For mere unmanliness. Out on them all!—  
Wits, puling minstrels, and philosophers,  
Who living softly prate of suicide,  
And suck the commonwealth to feed their ease  
While they vent epigrams and threnodies,  
Mocking or wailing all the eager work  
Which makes that public store whereon they feed.  
Is wisdom flattened sense and mere distaste?  
Why, any superstition warm with love,  
Inspired with purpose, wild with energy  
That streams resistless through its ready frame,  
Has more of human truth within its life  
Than souls that look through colour into nought,—  
Whose brain, too unimpassioned for delight,  
Has feeble ticklings of a vanity  
Which finds the universe beneath its mark,

And scorning the blue heavens as merely blue  
Can only say, 'What then?'—pre-eminent  
In wondrous want of likeness to their kind,  
Founding that worship of sterility  
Whose one supreme is vacillating Will  
Which makes the Light, then says, "'Twere better  
not.'"

Here rash Laertes brought his Handel-strain  
As of some angry Polyphemo, to pause ;  
And Osric, shocked at ardours out of taste,  
Relieved the audience with a tenor voice.  
And delicate delivery.

“For me,

I range myself in line with Rosencranz  
Against all schemes, religious or profane,  
That flaunt a Good as pretext for a lash  
To flog us all who have the better taste,  
Into conformity, requiring me  
At peril of the thong and sharp disgrace  
To care how mere Philistines pass their lives ;  
Whether the English pauper-total grows

From one to two before the noughts ; how far  
Teuton will outbreed Roman ; if the class  
Of proletaires will make a federal band  
To bind all Europe and America,  
Throw, in their wrestling, every government,  
Snatch the world's purse and keep the guillotine :  
Or else (admitting these are casualties)  
Driving my soul with scientific hail  
That shuts the landscape out with particles ;  
Insisting that the Palingogenesis  
Means telegraphs and measure of the rate  
At which the stars move—nobody knows where.  
So far, my Rosencranz, we are at one.  
But not when you blaspheme the life of Art,  
The sweet perennial youth of Poesy,  
Which asks no logic but its sensuous growth,  
No right but loveliness ; which fearless strolls  
Betwixt the burning mountain and the sea,  
Reckless of earthquake and the lava stream,  
Filling its hour with beauty. It knows nought  
Of bitter strife, denial, grim resolve,  
Sour resignation, busy emphasis

Of fresh illusions named the new-born True,  
Old Error's latest child ; but as a lake  
Images all things, yet within its depths  
Dreams them all lovelier—thrills with sound  
And makes a harp of plenteous liquid chords—  
So Art or Poesy: we its votaries  
Are the Olympians, fortunately born  
From the elemental mixture ; 'tis our lot  
To pass more swiftly than the Delian God,  
But still the earth breaks into flowers for us,  
And mortal sorrows when they reach our ears  
Are dying falls to melody divine.                   •

Hatred, war, vice, crime, sin, those human storms,  
Cyclones, floods, what you will—outbursts of force—  
Feed art with contrast, give the grander touch  
To the master's pencil and the poet's song,  
Serve as Vesuvian fires or navies tossed  
On yawning waters, which when viewed afar  
Deepen the calm sublime of those choice souls  
Who keep the heights of poesy and turn  
A fleckless mirror to the various world,  
Giving its many-named and fitful flux

An imaged, harmless, spiritual life,  
With pure selection, native to art's frame,  
Of beauty only, save its minor scale  
Of ill and pain to give the ideal joy  
A keener edge. This is a mongrel globe ;  
All finer being wrought from its coarse earth  
Is but accepted privilege : what else  
Your boasted virtue, which proclaims itself  
A good above the average consciousness?  
Nature exists by partiality  
(Each planet's poise must carry two extremes  
With verging breadths of minor wretchedness):  
We are her favourites and accept our wings.  
For your accusal, Rosencranz, that art  
Shares in the dread and weakness of the time,  
I hold it null ; since art or poesy pure,  
Being blameless by all standards save her own,  
Takes no account of modern or antique  
In morals, science, or philosophy:  
No dull elenchus makes a yoke for her,  
Whose law and measure are the sweet consent  
Of sensibilities that move apart

From rise or fall of systems, states or creeds—  
Apart from what Philistines call man's weal."

"Ay, we all know those votaries of the Muse  
Ravished with singing till they quite forgot  
Their manhood, sang, and gaped, and took no food,  
Then died of emptiness, and for reward  
Lived on as grasshoppers"—Laertes thus :  
But then he checked himself as one who feels  
His muscles dangerous, and Guildenstern  
Filled up the pause with calmer confidence.

•

"You use your wings, my Osric, poise yourself  
Safely outside all reach of argument,  
Then dogmatise at will (a method known  
To ancient women and philosophers,  
Nay, to Philistines whom you most abhor);  
Else, could an arrow reach you, I should ask  
Whence came taste, beauty, sensibilities  
Refined to preference infallible?  
Doubtless, ye're gods—these odours ye inhale,  
A sacrificial scent. But how, I pray,

Are odours made, if not by gradual change  
Of sense or substance? Is your beautiful  
A seedless, rootless flower, or has it grown  
With human growth, which means the rising sun  
Of human struggle, order, knowledge?—sense  
Trained to a fuller record, more exact—  
To truer guidance of each passionate force?  
Get me your roseate flesh without the blood;  
Get fine aromas without structure wrought  
From simpler being into manifold:  
Then and then only flaunt your Beautiful  
As what can live apart from thought, creeds, states,  
Which mean life's structures—Osric, I beseech—  
The infallible should be more catholic—  
Join in a war-dance with the cannibals,  
Hear Chinese music, love a face tattooed,  
Give adoration to a pointed skull,  
And think the Hindu Siva looks divine:  
'Tis art, 'tis poesy. Say, you object:  
How came you by that lofty dissidence,  
If not through changes in the social man  
Widening his consciousness from Here and Now

To larger wholes beyond the reach of sense ;  
Controlling to a fuller harmony  
The thrill of passion and the rule of fact ;  
And paling false ideals in the light  
Of full-rayed sensibilities which blend  
Truth and desire? Taste, beauty, what are they  
But the soul's choice towards perfect bias wrought  
By finer balance of a fuller growth—  
Sense brought to subtlest metamorphosis  
Through love, thought, joy—the general human  
store  
Which grows from all life's functions? As the  
plant  
•  
Holds its corolla, purple, delicate,  
Solely as outflush of that energy  
Which moves transformingly in root and branch.”

Guildestern paused, and Hamlet quivering  
Since Osric spoke, in transit imminent  
From catholic striving into laxity,  
Ventured his word. “Seems to me, Guildestern,  
Your argument, though shattering Osric's point

That sensibilities can move apart  
From social order, yet has not annulled  
His thesis that the life of poesy  
(Admitting it must grow from out the whole)  
Has separate functions, a transfigured realm  
Freed from the rigours of the practical,  
Where what is hidden from the grosser world—  
Stormed down by roar of engines and the shouts  
Of eager concourse—rises beauteous  
As voice of water-drops in sapphire caves ;  
A realm where finest spirits have free sway  
In exquisite selection, uncontrolled  
By hard material necessity  
Of cause and consequence. For you will grant  
The Ideal has discoveries which ask  
No test, no faith, save that we joy in them :  
A new-found continent, with spreading lands  
Where pleasure charters all, where virtue, rank,  
Use, right, and truth have but one name, Delight.  
Thus Art's creations, when etherealised  
To least admixture of the grosser fact  
Delight may stamp as highest."

“Possible !”

Said Guildenstern, with touch of weariness,  
“But then we might dispute of what is gross,  
What high, what low.”

“Nay,” said Laertes; “ask  
The mightiest makers who have reigned, still reign  
Within the ideal realm. See if their thought  
Be drained of practice and the thick warm blood  
Of hearts that beat in action various  
Through the wide drama of the struggling world.  
Good-bye, Horatio.”

Each now said “Good-bye.”

Such breakfast, such beginning of the day  
Is more than half the whole. The sun was hot  
On southward branches of the meadow elms,  
The shadows slowly farther crept and veered  
Like changing memories, and Hamlet strolled  
Alone and dubious on the empurpled path  
Between the waving grasses of new June  
Close by the stream where well-compacted boats  
Were moored or moving with a lazy creak

To the soft dip of oars. All sounds were light  
As tiny silver bells upon the robes  
Of hovering silence. Birds made twitterings  
That seemed but Silence self o'erfull of love.  
'Twas invitation all to sweet repose ;  
And Hamlet, drowsy with the mingled draughts  
Of cider and conflicting sentiments,  
Chose a green couch and watched with half-closed  
eyes

The meadow-road, the stream and dreamy lights,  
Until they merged themselves in sequence strange  
With undulating ether, time, the soul,  
The will supreme, the individual claim,  
The social Ought, the lyrist's liberty,  
Democritus, Pythagoras, in talk  
With Anselm, Darwin, Comte, and Schopenhauer,  
The poets rising slow from out their tombs  
Summoned as arbiters—that border-world  
Of dozing, ere the sense is fully locked.

And then he dreamed a dream so luminous  
He woke (he says) convinced ; but what it taught

Withholds as yet. Perhaps those graver shades  
Admonished him that visions told in haste  
Part with their virtues to the squandering lips  
And leave the soul in wider emptiness.

*April 1874.*

TWO LOVERS

## TWO LOVERS.

---

Two lovers by a moss-grown spring:

They leaned soft cheeks together there,

Mingled the dark and sunny hair,

And heard the wooing thrushes sing.

O budding time!

O love's blest prime!

Two wedded from the portal stopt:

The bells made happy carollings,

The air was soft as fanning wings,

White petals on the pathway slept.

O pure-eyed bride!

O tender pride!

Two faces o'er a cradle bent:

Two hands above the head were locked;

These pressed each other while they rocked,

Those watched a life that love had sent.

O solemn hour !

O hidden power !

Two parents by the evening fire:

The red light fell about their knees

On heads that rose by slow degrees

Like buds upon the lily spire.

O patient life !

O tender strife !

The two still sat together there,

The red light shone about their knees ;

But all the heads by slow degrees

Had gone and left that lonely pair.

O voyage fast !

O vanished past !

The red light shone upon the floor  
And made the space between them wide;  
They drew their chairs up side by side,  
Their pale cheeks joined, and said, "Once more!"

O memories !

O past that is !

1866.

# SELF AND LIFE

# SELF AND LIFE.

---

## SELF.

CHANGEFUL comrade, Life of mine,

Before we two must part,

I will tell thee, thou shalt say,

What thou hast been and art.

Ere I lose my hold of thee

Justify thyself to me.

## LIFE.

I was thy warmth upon thy mother's knee

When light and love within her eyes were one ;

We laughed together by the laurel-tree,

Culling warm daisies 'neath the sloping sun ;

We heard the chickens' lazy croon,  
Where the trellised woodbines grew,  
And all the summer afternoon  
Mystic gladness o'er thee threw.  
Was it person? Was it thing?  
Was it touch or whispering?  
It was bliss and it was I:  
Bliss was what thou knew'st me by.

## SELF.

Soon I knew thee more by Fear  
And sense of what was not,  
Haunting all I held most dear;  
I had a double lot :  
Ardour, cheated with alloy,  
Wept the more for dreams of joy.

## LIFE.

Remember how thy ardour's magic sense  
Made poor things rich to thee and small things  
great;  
How hearth and garden, field and bushy fence,  
Were thy own eager love incorporate;

And how the solemn, splendid Past  
O'er thy early widened earth  
Made grandeur, as on sunset cast  
Dark elms near take mighty girth.  
Hands and feet were tiny still  
When we knew the historic thrill,  
Breathed deep breath in heroes dead,  
Tasted the immortals' bread

## SELF.

Seeing what I might have been  
Reproved the thing I was,  
Smoke on heaven's clearest sheen,  
The speck within the rose.  
By revered ones' frailties stung  
Reverence was with anguish wrung.

## LIFE.

But all thy anguish and thy discontent  
Was growth of mine, the elemental strife  
Towards feeling manifold with vision blent  
To wider thought: I was no vulgar life

That, like the water-mirrored ape,  
Not discerns the thing it sees,  
Nor knows its own in others' shape,  
Railing, scorning, at its ease.

Half man's truth must hidden lie  
If unlit by Sorrow's eye.  
I by Sorrow wrought in thee  
Willing pain of ministry.

SELF.

Slowly was the lesson taught  
Through passion, error, care ,  
Insight was with loathing fraught  
And effort with despair.  
Written on the wall I saw  
"Bow !" I knew, not loved, the law.

LIFE.

But then I brought a love that wrote within  
The law of gratitude, and made thy heart  
Beat to the heavenly tune of seraphin  
Whose only joy in having is, to impart :

Till thou, poor Self—despite thy ire,  
Wrestling 'gainst my mingled share,  
Thy faults, hard falls, and vain desire  
Still to be what others were—  
Filled, o'erflowed with tenderness  
Seeming more as thou wert less,  
Knew me through that anguish past  
As a fellowship more vast.

## SELF.

Yea, I embrace thee, changeful Life!

Far-sent, unchosen mate!

Self and thou, no more at strife,

Shall wed in hallowed state.

Willing spousals now shall prove

Life is justified by love.

“SWEET EVENINGS COME AND GO, LOVE”

“SWEET EVENINGS COME AND GO, LOVE.”

---

“La noche buena se viene,  
La noche buena se va,  
Y nosotros nos iremos  
Y no volveremos mas.”

—Old Villancico.

SWEET evenings come and go, love,  
They came and went of yore :  
This evening of our life, love,  
Shall go and come no more.

When we have passed away, love,  
All things will keep their name ;  
But yet no life on earth, love,  
With ours will be the same.

The daisies will be there, love,

The stars in heaven will shine :

I shall not feel thy wish, love,

Nor thou my hand in thine.

A better time will come, love,

And better souls be born :

I would not be the best, love,

To leave thee now forlorn.

# THE DEATH OF MOSES

## THE DEATH OF MOSES.

---

Moses, who spake with God as with his friend,  
And ruled his people with the twofold power  
Of wisdom that can dare and still be meek,  
Was writing his last word, the sacred name  
Unutterable of that Eternal Will  
Which was and is and evermore shall be.  
Yet was his task not finished, for the flock  
Needed its shepherd and the life-taught sage  
Leaves no successor; but to chosen men,  
The rescuers and guides of Israel,  
A death was given called the Death of Grace,  
Which freed them from the burden of the flesh

But left them rulers of the multitude  
And loved companions of the lonely. This  
Was God's last gift to Moses, this the hour  
When soul must part from self and be but soul.

God spake to Gabriel, the messenger  
Of mildest death that draws the parting life  
Gently, as when a little rosy child  
Lifts up its lips from off the bowl of milk  
And so draws forth a curl that dipped its gold  
In the soft white—thus Gabriel draws the soul.

“Go bring the soul of Moses unto me!”

And the awe-stricken angel answered, “Lord,  
How shall I dare to take his life who lives  
Sole of his kind, not to be likened once  
In all the generations of the earth?”

Then God called Michaël, him of pensive brow  
Snow-vest and flaming sword, who knows and acts:

“Go bring the spirit of Moses unto me!”

But Michaël with such grief as angels feel,  
Loving the mortals whom they succour, pled:

“Almighty, spare me ; it was I who taught  
Thy servant Moses ; he is part of me  
As I of thy deep secrets, knowing them.”

Then God called Zamaël, the terrible,  
The angel of fierce death, of agony  
That comes in battle and in pestilence  
Remorseless, sudden or with lingering throes.  
And Zamaël, his raiment and broad wings  
Blood-tinctured, the dark lustre of his eyes  
Shrouding the red, fell like the gathering night  
Before the prophet. But that radiance  
Won from the heavenly presence in the mount  
Gleamed on the prophet's brow and dazzling pierced  
Its conscious opposite: the angel turned  
His murky gaze aloof and inly said:  
“An angel this, deathless to angel's stroke.”

But Moses felt the subtly nearing dark:—

“Who art thou? and what wilt thou?” Zamaël  
then:

“I am God's reaper; through the fields of life

I gather ripened and unripened souls  
Both willing and unwilling. And I come  
Now to reap thee." But Moses cried,  
Firm as a seer who waits the trusted sign:  
"Reap thou the fruitless plant and common herb—  
Not him who from the womb was sanctified  
To teach the law of purity and love."  
And Zamaël baffled from his errand fled.

But Moses, pausing, in the air serene  
Heard now that mystic whisper, far yet near,  
The all-penetrating Voice, that said to him,  
"Moses, the hour is come and thou must die."  
"Lord, I obey; but thou rememberest  
How thou, Ineffable, didst take me once  
Within thy orb of light untouched by death."  
Then the voice answered, "Be no more afraid:  
With me shall be thy death and burial."  
So Moses waited, ready now to die.

And the Lord came, invisible as a thought,  
Three angels gleaming on his secret track,

Prince Michaël, Zagaël, Gabriel, charged to guard  
The soul-forsaken body as it fell  
And bear it to the hidden sepulchre  
Denied for ever to the search of man.  
And the Voice said to Moses : “ Close thine eyes.”  
He closed them. “ Lay thine hand upon thine heart,  
And draw thy feet together.” He obeyed.  
And the Lord said, “ O spirit ! child of mine !  
A hundred years and twenty thou hast dwelt  
Within this tabernacle wrought of clay.  
This is the end : come forth and flee to heaven.”

But the grieved soul, with plaintive pleading cried,  
“ I love this body with a clinging love :  
The courage fails me, Lord, to part from it.”

“ O child, come forth ! for thou shalt dwell with me  
About the immortal throne where seraphs joy  
In growing vision and in growing love.”

Yet hesitating, fluttering, like the bird  
With young wing weak and dubious, the soul

Stayed. But behold ! upon the death-dewed lips  
A kiss descended, pure, unspeakable—  
The bodiless Love without embracing Love  
That lingered in the body, drew it forth  
With heavenly strength and carried it to heaven.

But now beneath the sky the watchers all,  
Angels that keep the homes of Israel  
Or on high purpose wander o'er the world  
Leading the Gentiles, felt a dark eclipse :  
The greatest ruler among men was gone.  
And from the westward sea was heard a wail,  
A dirge as from the isles of Javanim,  
Crying, " Who now is left upon the earth  
Like him to teach the right and smite the wrong ?"  
And from the East, far o'er the Syrian waste,  
Came slower, sadder, the answering dirge :  
" No prophet like him lives or shall arise  
In Israel or the world for evermore."

But Israel waited, looking toward the mount,  
Till with the deepening eve the elders came

Saying, "His burial is hid with God.  
We stood far off and saw the angels lift  
His corpse aloft until they seemed a star  
That burnt itself away within the sky." :

The people answered with mute orphaned gaze  
Looking for what had vanished evermore.  
Then through the gloom without them and within  
The spirit's shaping light, mysterious speech,  
Invisible Will wrought clear in sculptured sound,  
The thought-begotten daughter of the voice,  
Thrilled on their listening sense: "He has no tomb.  
He dwells not with you dead, but lives as Law."

A R I O N

# ARION.

(HEROD. I. 24.)

---

ARION, whose melodic soul  
Taught the dithyramb to roll  
Like forest fires, and sing  
Olympian suffering,

Had carried his diviner lore  
From Corinth to the sister shore  
Where Greece could largelier be,  
Branching o'er Italy.

Then weighted with his glorious name  
And bags of gold, aboard he came  
    'Mid harsh seafaring men  
    To Corinth bound again.

The sailors eyed the bags and thought :  
“ The gold is good, the man is nought—  
    And who shall track the wave  
    That opens for his grave ? ”

•  
With brawny arms and cruel eyes  
They press around him where he lies  
    In sleep beside his lyre,  
    Hearing the Muses quire.

He waked and saw this wolf-faced Death  
Breaking the dream that filled his breath  
    With inspiration strong  
    Of yet unchanted song.

“Take, take my gold and let me live !”

He prayed, as kings do when they give

    Their all with royal will,

    Holding born kingship still.

To rob the living they refuse,

One death or other he must choose,

    Either the watery pall

    Or wounds and burial.

“My solemn robe then let me don,

Give me high space to stand upon,

    That dying I may pour

    A song unsung before.”

It pleased them well to grant this prayer,

To hear for nought how it might fare

    With men who paid their gold

    For what a poet sold.

In flowing stole, his eyes aglow  
With inward fire, he neared the prow  
And took his god-like stand,  
The cithara in hand.

The wolfish men all shrank aloof,  
And feared this singer might be proof  
Against their murderous power,  
After his lyric hour.

But he, in liberty of song,  
Fearless of death or other wrong,  
With full spondaic toll  
Poured forth his mighty soul :

Poured forth the strain his dream had taught,  
A nome with lofty passion fraught  
Such as makes battles won  
On fields of Marathon.

The last long vowels trembled then

As awe within those wolfish men :

They said, with mutual stare,

Some god was present there.

But lo ! Arion leaped on high

Ready, his descant done, to die ;

Not asking, “ Is it well ? ”

Like a pierced eagle fell

“O MAY I JOIN THE CHOIR INVISIBLE”

“O MAY I JOIN THE CHOIR INVISIBLE.”

---

*Longum illud tempus, quum non ero, magis me movet, quam hoc exiguum.*—CICERO, ad Att., xii. 18.

O MAY I join the choir invisible  
Of those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence: live  
In pulses stirred to generosity,  
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn  
For miserable aims that end with self,  
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like  
stars,  
And with their mild persistence urge man's search  
To vaster issues.

So to live is heaven :

To make undying music in the world,  
Breathing as beauteous order that controls  
With growing sway the growing life of man.  
So we inherit that sweet purity  
For which we struggled, failed, and agonised  
With widening retrospect that bred despair.  
Rebellious flesh that would not be subdued,  
A vicious parent shaming still its child  
Poor anxious penitence, is quick dissolved ;  
Its discords, quenched by meeting harmonies,  
Die in the large and charitable air.  
And all our rarer, better, truer self,  
That sobbed religiously in yearning song,  
That watched to ease the burthen of the world,  
Laboriously tracing what must be,  
And what may yet be better—saw within  
A worthier image for the sanctuary,  
And shaped it forth before the multitude  
Divinely human, raising worship so  
To higher reverence more mixed with love—  
That better self shall live till human Time

Shall fold its eyelids, and the human sky  
Be gathered like a scroll within the tomb  
Unread for ever.

                    This is life to come,  
Which martyred men have made more glorious  
For us who strive to follow. May I reach  
That purest heaven, be to other souls  
The cup of strength in some great agony,  
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,  
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty—  
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,  
And in diffusion ever more intense.  
So shall I join the choir invisible  
Whose music is the gladness of the world.

1867.

THE END.